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THE MAGAZINE OF THE
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

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ON THE COVER: Grant Larson, pictured at Broncos Stadium at Mile High, is a 2017 alumnus of Colorado State University and the Denver Broncos Sport Management Institute. Through the institute, he landed a job as communications manager for the Denver Outlaws, a Major League Lacrosse team. Photo by Mary Neiberg

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TEAM PLAYERS

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A new vision for Colorado State University-Pueblo

Timothy Mottet, president of CSU-Pueblo, recently introduced Vision 2028, a 10-year strategic plan to remake the campus as the "people's university of the Southwest." The plan builds on the institution's strengths as a regional comprehensive university.



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[STATE WIDE]

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Together, we make Colorado our home – and our state. ♦

Garden of the Gods
Park, Colorado Springs.
Photo by Mark Reis

LEADERS

in Biosecurity

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Jan Leach is a University Distinguished Professor who works to protect rice – a global food staple – from devastating diseases. Her research supports food security, while also providing important insight into critically threatening plant pathogens.



**VICE PRESIDENT
FOR RESEARCH**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Photo by William A. Cotton / Colorado State University

[STATE WIDE]

JOYCE MCCONNELL APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

“CSU IS A NATIONAL LEADER IN HIGHER EDUCATION, AND IT HAS POWERFUL MOMENTUM AND AN UPWARD TRAJECTORY THAT CAN’T BE STOPPED. THANK YOU ALL FOR GIVING ME THIS REMARKABLE OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD THIS INSTITUTION. I’M SO EXCITED FOR ALL THAT WE’RE GOING TO ACCOMPLISH TOGETHER.”

– JOYCE MCCONNELL

11th year as CSU president and will have served five years in the dual roles of campus president and System chancellor. As chancellor, he leads high-level initiatives involving the System’s three campuses – CSU, CSU-Pueblo, and CSU-Global; among the System’s priorities is development of a CSU campus at the forthcoming National Western Center in north Denver.

In late March, the System’s Board of Governors concluded a highly competitive five-month search by voting unanimously to hire McConnell from a pool of more than 80 candidates. She will be the first female president at CSU.

Rico Munn, chair of the Board of Governors and superintendent of Aurora Public Schools, described McConnell as an experienced leader with a deep passion for the work of higher education. She has the ability to unite diverse groups in a common drive for excellence, Munn said.

McConnell brings to CSU a wealth of experience as chief academic and budget officer at West Virginia’s land-grant university. Like Colorado State, WVU is a top-tier public research institution; it is home to professional schools of law, medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy. There, McConnell has been responsible for the administration of academic policies, curriculum, budgetary matters, facilities, libraries, outreach programs, and research. She also has worked closely with policymakers and helped lead WVU’s recent \$1.2 billion fundraising campaign.

McConnell is a lawyer who earned degrees at Evergreen State College, Antioch School of Law, and Georgetown University Law School. She worked for 20 years at West Virginia, starting as an associate professor of law. McConnell rose to dean of the WVU law school, then served as second-in-command with WVU President Gordon Gee, who was University of Colorado president in the late 1980s.

“I deeply believe in the power of education to transform lives and families,” McConnell said, after her appointment was finalized. “For 150 years, CSU has been creating the talent and research essential to Colorado’s prosperity. I am excited to bring my passion for this mission to CSU, Fort Collins, and Colorado and to continue to nurture the thriving spirit that created this university and is still evident today.” ♦

Joyce E. McConnell, who recently served as provost and vice president for academic affairs at West Virginia University, is the new leader of Colorado State University, the state’s land-grant institution and flagship of the CSU System.

On July 1, McConnell starts her term as CSU’s 15th president. She will lead Colorado State into its 150th anniversary, when the university will highlight its enduring land-grant mission of providing access to excellent education for students, pursuing scientific discoveries with global significance, and offering public service and outreach to boost the vitality of Colorado and its citizens.

She steps into the role at an eventful time: CSU is a top-tier research institution whose national reputation has surged along with notable strides in enrollment, graduation rates, research funding, private giving, and facilities expansion. The university has about 33,000 students and 7,600 faculty and staff.

“CSU is a national leader in higher education, and it has powerful momentum and an upward trajectory that can’t be stopped,” McConnell said at a meeting of the Board of Governors of the CSU System, as her appointment was confirmed. “Thank you all for giving me this remarkable opportunity to lead this institution. I’m so excited for all that we’re going to accomplish together.”

McConnell succeeds outgoing President Tony Frank, who begins serving as full-time chancellor of the CSU System on July 1. Frank is completing his



Joyce McConnell, who has served as second-in-command at West Virginia University, will become president of Colorado State University in Fort Collins on July 1.



Photo by John Eisele / Colorado State University

Water in the West Symposium

Event planned in November

WATER AND ITS IMPORTANCE to agriculture, municipalities, industry, the environment, and recreation will be the focus of the second Water in the West Symposium near Denver this fall.

The event, organized by the Colorado State University System, will be Nov. 6-7 at Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center in Aurora, with multiple invited speakers and panels focusing on the availability, use, and management of one of the region's most precious resources. The event is open to interested stakeholders.

The Water in the West Symposium reflects the collaborative teaching, research, public outreach, and problem-solving led by the CSU Campus at the forthcoming National Western Center.

For a list of speakers, full agenda, and registration, visit nwc.colostate.edu. ♦



CSU CELEBRATES 150 YEARS

THIS FALL, COLORADO STATE will kick off 150th anniversary celebrations to mark the school's founding on Feb. 11, 1870.

That's when the territorial governor of Colorado authorized creation of a public land-grant college of agriculture and mechanic arts in keeping with the Morrill Act of 1862.

The Morrill Act granted public lands to each state; proceeds from the sale of those lands established public colleges and universities to educate children of the working classes. The move revolutionized public higher education with a core tenet of access and transformed traditional university curricula to improve lives and drive innovation.

Anniversary festivities begin with the President's Fall Address and University Picnic on Sept. 19 and continue during CSU Homecoming & Family Weekend Oct. 2-6. To observe Founders Day in February 2020, the university will honor Libbie Coy, one of three students in the first graduating class of 1884 and — as the first woman to graduate from any college or university in Colorado — a symbol of the land-grant university's abiding commitment to educational access and inclusion. ♦

A drawing from architect George E. King depicts Old Main prior to construction in 1878. Courtesy of Colorado State University Libraries, Archives & Special Collections

[STATE WIDE]

FILLING THE PIPELINE

Program provides inflow of diversity for improved water policy

Daniel Dominguez, a senior studying watershed science at Colorado State University, surveyed the room last fall during the Sustaining Colorado Watersheds Conference. More than 200 people had gathered in a meeting room overlooking the Eagle River west of Vail to hear scientific presentations and discuss watershed conservation.

Despite the sweeping importance of the topic – for agriculture, industry, households, communities, recreation, and the environment – Dominguez was one of just two people of color at the water conference. The other was a fellow Hispanic student.

For Dominguez, it was a jolting reminder of the need for a wider array of perspectives and expertise in water-related policy discussions, not only to improve ideas and problem-solving but to ensure equity in the delivery of an essential natural resource.

“Water is one of those things that touches everyone,” Dominguez said. “It’s important to get as many perspectives as we can, because different people with different backgrounds will help build the science that moves our communities to better solutions.”

That concept is at the core of the CSU Water Sustainability

Fellows Program, part of the Colorado Water Center, a university leader in water-related research, education, and public outreach. Launched in 2016, the program works with about a dozen minority undergraduates each academic year. They meet regularly to learn about water management and conservation issues, to interact with professionals, and to collaborate on community service projects.

In one outreach effort, called the National Western Center Youth Water Project, water fellows work with high school students to present a summertime water festival for neighborhoods in north Denver; the project is tied to CSU’s water-related work at the forthcoming National Western Center.

Together, the activities are designed to build water knowledge and interest among students from diverse backgrounds, ultimately aiming to improve the inflow of minority scholars to water-related

careers and decision-making in a complex – and increasingly thirsty – world.

The need for greater diversity in water policy discussions gained pointed national attention as the water crisis exploded in Flint, Michigan, starting in 2014. A switch in the city’s water supply, combined with treatment failures, resulted in delivery of



Daniel Dominguez

[STATE WIDE]

household water contaminated with dangerous levels of lead. The crisis, in a predominantly African American city, sparked allegations of systemic racism and has fueled widespread efforts to improve societal representation in water decision-making.

“Our environment and natural resources are fundamental to life on Earth, and they are relevant to all communities,” noted John Hayes, dean of CSU’s Warner College of Natural Resources, when he attended a water fellows session as guest speaker in April.

Dip a toe in the topic of water, especially against a backdrop of drought, climate change, and booming global population growth, and it’s easy to see why it is considered one of the world’s “wicked problems”: Water management is so complicated and contentious – fraught with legal, environmental, social, and economic issues – that solutions often seem impossible.

“Water is a problem that needs every single perspective you can get,” said Blake Osborn, a biracial adviser for the Water Sustainability Fellows Program who also works as a CSU water resources specialist in southern Colorado.

Dominguez said the need for greater diversity in water research, classrooms, and policy discussions hit him after formative experiences in multiracial settings: He grew up in a Latino community in San Diego, served in the U.S. Marine Corps, and studied abroad with a CSU program called Communities and Conservation in South Africa. Those experiences and his studies in

watershed science have inspired Dominguez to pursue a career addressing urban water concerns.

As a water fellow, he was invited to attend the 2018 Sustaining Colorado Watersheds Conference near Vail and to recommend ways to increase diversity at the annual event. In a letter to organizers, Dominguez advised more focused outreach to minority presenters and attendees, among other strategies. “The inclusion

of these underrepresented groups is a critical factor in the overall success of future solutions to water issues we will face,” he noted in written recommendations.

Casey Davenhill, executive director of the Colorado Watershed Assembly, the meeting’s host, said she took the student’s recommendations seriously.

“We are looking to enlarge our network so it is more inclusive and more responsive,” Davenhill said. “Water is a public resource. It’s so im-

portant to us all – so it’s important to broaden the conversation and our ability to think outside the box. How are we going to do that without different perspectives?” ♦

“Water is one of those things that touches everyone. It’s important to get as many perspectives as we can, because different people with different backgrounds will help build the science that moves our communities to better solutions.”

– Daniel Dominguez, water fellow

Facing page, below: Blake Osborn, adviser for the CSU Water Sustainability Fellows Program, leads a discussion about water rights as Victor Diaz, Karen Chico, Daniel Dominguez, and Diane Meraz listen. This page, below: Diaz, Hugo Lezama, Dominguez, and Meraz discuss lagoons and reservoirs; Meraz, a student in watershed science, observes a presentation. Photography by Tanya Bylinsky Fabian





FRESHMAN ORIENTATION

New law boosts higher-ed access for Colorado students

Graduates of Colorado high schools have a new way to earn bachelor's degrees in their home state: through the online programs offered by Colorado State University-Global.

The Colorado General Assembly unanimously approved a bill, signed into law in March 2018, allowing the online university to enroll first-time freshmen in Colorado. CSU-Global was created to offer graduate education and bachelor's degree completion, so the university earlier admitted undergraduates only if they had previous college credit and sought to finish their degrees. The new law opens virtual doorways to higher education for Colorado students with no previous college experience who seek flexible, affordable, high-caliber courses from CSU-Global, the nation's first fully online public university with accredited degree programs.

The shift is a sign of a changing higher-education landscape, in which a growing number of students want new and customized routes to degrees while navigating higher-education costs, along with work and personal responsibilities.

Data illustrate the need. In 2007, CSU-Global entered the online sphere adhering to the academic standards and financial accountability demanded of public universities. Since its first cohort graduated in 2009, more than 18,000 students have completed certificates, bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees through CSU-Global.

The fully online model does not meet the needs of all college learners, President Becky Takeda-Tinker noted. Yet for some, it is a critical path to degrees that unlock career opportunities, simultaneously promoting workforce development and the economy.

"The year before this legislation passed, we disqualified more than 1,800 freshmen from Colorado who were seeking to enter our university," Takeda-Tinker said. "Our enrollment counselors had to tell high school graduates in our own state that we could not help them. The recordings of those conversations were heart-wrenching, because we could hear a young person sounding completely rejected and defeated when the counselors tried to explain 'no' as gently as possible.

"With the new law, we can now have meaningful discussions and explorations, and then let students decide if CSU-Global can meet their needs for success, or what other

institutions might be a better fit. That's empowering instead of discouraging, and that's exactly what we need to be doing as a public university in Colorado."

In the six months after the new law took effect, more than 100 Colorado freshmen have started classes, records show. They live across the state, many in rural communities where the online option

expands educational access. The first-time Colorado students join 200 additional freshmen, among nearly 20,000 total CSU-Global students living across the nation and in countries around the world.

The university's freshmen, though small in number, are sticking with their studies: Nearly 90 percent of first-time students admitted in 2019 have continued online course work from their first to their third terms, a strong sign of retention.

CSU-Global offers 25 degree programs, with dozens of specializations and certificates. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks CSU-Global No. 8 on its list of "Best Online Bachelor's Programs" and No. 6 among "Best Online Bachelor's Programs for Veterans." ♦

"With the new law, we can now have meaningful discussions and explorations, and then let students decide if CSU-Global can meet their needs for success, or what other institutions might be a better fit. That's empowering instead of discouraging, and that's exactly what we need to be doing as a public university in Colorado."

— Becky Takeda-Tinker, president, CSU-Global

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVE CUTLER

GROUNDBREAKING SET

The CSU Campus at the National Western Center will focus on food, water, sustainability, and human and animal health

Plans are crystallizing for the Colorado State University Campus at the forthcoming National Western Center – the visionary redevelopment of the National Western Stock Show grounds that will transform an integral part of north Denver into a year-round hub for education, research, events, and entertainment.

After years of planning, the CSU System will start construction in 2020 on a \$200 million campus comprising three buildings that form a launchpad for teaching, research, public outreach, and collaborative problem-solving. Work at the campus will spark innovations that fulfill some of life's most fundamental needs: food, water, environmental sustainability, and human and animal health.

JE Dunn Construction was recently selected as general contractor for the three Colorado State University buildings – the Water Building, Center for Food & Agriculture, and Animal Health Complex. Completion is expected in 2022.

The CSU Campus in Denver will connect to \$50 million in new and improved facilities on the flagship

campus in Fort Collins, including the recently completed Health Education Outreach Center, which provides state-of-the-art laboratories for learning in human anatomy and neuroanatomy.

"Our efforts at the National Western Center will be a front door to the world-class research at CSU. This project will amplify efforts by pulling in partners year-round, engaging citizen scientists, and inspiring children who might not know where their food comes from now, but will help us solve the global food crisis in the future," said Amy Parsons, executive vice chancellor of the CSU System.

"This is much more than a collection of buildings," Parsons said. "What happens within them will change the world."

The Colorado General Assembly provided funding for CSU's capital construction at the National Western Center with a financing bill passed in 2015.

The CSU System is one of five founding partners in the National Western Center. The others are the city and county of Denver, the Western Stock Show Association, the Denver Museum of

Nature & Science, and History Colorado.

As a result of the partnership, the storied National Western Stock Show will continue its annual appearance on the site, maintaining an economic force in Denver with vast improvements in equine, livestock, and other facilities. The National Western Center will offer many additional attractions and resources that were not previously available.

As plans for the CSU Campus take clear shape, advance programming is well underway. The Water in the West Symposium, for instance, is entering its second year. Several other community-based education and outreach programs involve the Globeville and Elyria-Swansea neighborhoods near the National Western Center site. Learn more at nwc.colostate.edu. ♦

An architect's rendering depicts the forthcoming National Western Center, which will include a Colorado State University campus of three buildings offering a range of teaching, research, public engagement, and collaborative programming.



TWO CAMPUSES OPEN DOORS

Integrated programs support agricultural communities

Colorado beef and wine, Pueblo chile peppers, Rocky Ford cantaloupe, and Palisade peaches.

It sounds like a perfect dinner menu.

And that's a key outcome driving two Colorado State University campuses opening this summer to provide education, research, veterinary diagnostics, and community engagement that support vital agricultural regions in the western and southeastern parts of the state.

The CSU Western Colorado Campus in Orchard Mesa and the CSU Arkansas Valley Campus in Rocky Ford are built on existing university sites. Yet both feature newly constructed facilities and, for the first time, bring together several units supporting rural Colorado residents, communities, and farms and ranches that grow some of the state's best-known food products.

The campuses and their co-located programs will improve university services and ease of access for area residents. "These campuses provide integrated services so community residents truly have Colorado State University at their doorsteps," said Troy Bauder, a project leader with CSU's Agricultural Experiment Station.

Support from local policymakers and the Colorado General Assembly was critical for planning and financing the two redeveloped campuses, CSU officials noted.

The Western Colorado Campus, near Grand Junction, features two new facilities, with construction costs totaling \$11 million: a state-of-the-art branch of CSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories, which provides testing and expertise needed to diagnose, treat, and prevent disease in livestock and companion animals; and a second building with offices, a large community classroom, and multiple public meeting areas.

Along with veterinary diagnosticians, regional CSU Office of Engagement, CSU Extension, and Colorado State Forest Service staff will move to the Western Colorado Campus, joining Agricultural Experiment Station staff already working there.

The campus serves as headquarters for three Western Slope branches of the Agricultural Experiment Station, which investigates soil and crop issues and provides growers with knowledge about successful varieties and best practices in soil and water conservation, among other production concerns. On the Western Slope, much of this research relates to tree fruit – yes, the region's famous peaches – and to an expanding interest in production of wine grapes.

The Arkansas Valley Campus in Rocky Ford is about 50 miles east of Pueblo on the Arkansas River, a region on the state's Eastern Plains well-known for vegetable and melon farming.

The site is already home to the oldest branch of CSU's Agricultural Experiment Station off the main campus; established in 1888, it supports research into irrigated crop production, water quality and conservation, and development of unique and regionally adapted crop varieties, including chile peppers.



Photo by William A. Cotton / Colorado State University

The Arkansas Valley Campus also is home to the southeastern Colorado branch of CSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories. With a new \$2 million multipurpose building, the campus additionally co-locates CSU Extension offices for both Otero County and the southeastern Colorado region.

CSU Office of Engagement programs, now featured at both campus locations, provide scientific knowledge to support community, workforce, and economic development; the office includes the Colorado Water Center, among other units. CSU Extension programs, including 4-H youth development, help individuals apply university research to improve their work and personal lives. ♦

Orchard Mesa, near Grand Junction, is the site of the CSU Western Colorado Campus opening this summer; the CSU Arkansas Valley Campus, in Rocky Ford, will also unveil new and improved facilities.



RED FLAG

Half of Colorado's population now lives in areas at risk for wildfire

In a report amounting to a red flag for wildfire danger, the Colorado State Forest Service recently revealed that half of Colorado's population lives in the wildland-urban interface, where risks are greatest for destruction of life and property during wildfires.

In interface zones, housing development abuts forest and grasslands. The proximity carries inherent risks when dry vegetation ignites and grows into dangerous wildfire, a familiar pattern in a state with a semi-arid climate and intermittent drought.

In a state with 5.6 million people, an estimated 2.9 million lived in interface zones in 2017, according to Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment data released in November.

Equally notable was the increase: The number of homes in the wildland-urban interface spiked by nearly 50 percent over five years, from 2012 to 2017, the assessment showed.

Illustrating the problem, the Waldo Canyon Fire raged in the foothills northwest of Colorado Springs in June 2012, causing two deaths, destroying 346 homes, and burning more than 18,000 acres. The wildfire was the most destructive in Colorado history – until just one year later: In June 2013, the Black Forest Fire, northeast of Colorado Springs, resulted in two deaths and destroyed 489 homes – an ominous new record – while scorching more than 14,000 acres, according to news reports.

"With the continued increase in Colorado's wildland-urban interface population, it's critical for landowners and communities to take actions to reduce their risk and address forest health concerns," said Mike Lester, state forester and Colorado State Forest Service director.

The new population data are included in updates to the Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal, or CO-WRAP, an online mapping tool that helps community leaders, professional planners, and interested citizens determine wildfire risk and where forest management actions may achieve the greatest impact to reduce risk. (The tool may be accessed at coloradowildfirerisk.com.)

The Colorado State Forest Service is a Colorado State University service and outreach agency that contributes to forest stewardship across the state. ♦

The Waldo Canyon Fire, which destroyed nearly 350 homes on the outskirts of Colorado Springs in 2012, illustrated the increased risk of fire hazards in wildland-urban interface zones. Photo by Helen H. Richardson / Getty Images

PREVENTING OPIOID ABUSE

Colorado State leads new community-based effort

As the opioid crisis grows more deadly nationwide, Colorado State University researchers are using \$1.4 million in federal grants to help adolescents avert drug experimentation by providing prevention programming for youth and their families in rural communities statewide.

- In May, the first group of participants began meeting with trained facilitators as part of a seven-week prevention course for parents and children ages 10 to 14. The sessions represent one of three aspects of Strengthening Families in Colorado, a program that targets opioid abuse and is led by CSU's Prevention Research Center and CSU Extension in collaboration with other organizations working to prevent drug misuse.

The first session began in Fort Morgan, in northeastern Colorado, with another starting this month in La Junta, in the southeastern part of the state. The sessions will extend this fall in Alamosa, Sterling, the San Luis Valley, and Grand Junction. The sites were selected to provide programming in rural regions across the state.

The Strengthening Families Program aligns with a community-based approach recommended by the Colorado Substance Abuse Trend and Response Task Force as a successful strategy for fighting opioid abuse.

The CSU project has trained professionals – including CSU Extension agents, teachers, mental-health professionals, and family therapists – to deliver prevention programming in communities where they live and work, a strategy meant to mobilize local expertise and concern to address a mounting national crisis.

In 2017, there were 578 opioid-related overdose deaths in Colorado, resulting from abuse of prescription painkillers, heroin, and synthetic opioids, chiefly fentanyl, according to the most recent overview data from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. That was a rate of 10 deaths per 100,000 people, compared to a national average of nearly 15 deaths per 100,000 people. Opioid deaths are the most acute representation of the crisis, a barometer of widespread opioid misuse that often has ruinous effects for individuals and families.

While the opioid crisis in Colorado generally is not as pronounced as it is in some other states, overdose deaths have climbed sharply in the state in recent years; that follows an alarming nationwide trend, in which more than 47,600 people died of opioid overdoses in 2017 alone, representing more than two-thirds of all drug overdose deaths, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. The epidemic has been especially difficult in many rural communities.

In addition to substance abuse prevention sessions for adolescents and their families, the Strengthening Families Program includes a campaign that uses social media and other outlets to change youth perceptions and attitudes about substance use, including the incorrect notion that “everybody’s doing it.” The program also involves a broad public-health campaign about the causes and consequences of opioid use. ♦



[STATE WIDE]

LITTLE CREATURES

Butterfly Pavilion and CSU System team up to tout invertebrates

With the zeal of a schoolkid, Sarah Triplett opened a cardboard mailer in a laboratory at Butterfly Pavilion near Denver. Inside, she found two small deli containers, one holding several striped bark scorpions; the other, a group of circus beetles.

- She admired the two-toned scorpions, then inspected the beetles and explained their unique habit: When threatened, the species stands on its head, abdomen in the air, and spews a stinky chemical.

"They're pretty cute," Triplett said, gazing wide-eyed at the black bugs. "I really like these guys."

The beetles and scorpions, which would join other natives in a Colorado Backyard exhibit, are among thousands of spineless creatures in Triplett's care at Butterfly Pavilion, a popular attraction in Westminster and the world's only standalone invertebrate zoo accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums.

As zookeeping manager and registrar at the facility, Triplett oversees breeding, feeding, housing, and record-keeping for (at last count) 7,290 invertebrates representing 380 species, including butterflies, moths, other insects, spiders, and even marine creatures.

Triplett also personifies an evolving partnership between Butterfly Pavilion and the Colorado State University System. A 2013 CSU graduate in biological science, Triplett became fascinated by invertebrates while taking an entomology course, which she happened into because the timing fit with her daughter's day care schedule. She then completed an internship at the pavilion, landed a full-time job, rose to a leadership role, and now is helping the two institutions pursue collaborative teaching, research, and public education centered on the creeping, crawling, buzzing, and fluttering little critters on which all life depends.

Invertebrates make up an estimated 95 percent of the animal kingdom, and they serve critical functions: They pollinate the flowers of innumerable plants to produce fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seeds — providing food for other species and new generations of plants. They decompose dead matter. And they provide a daily buffet for larger animals.

"Every ecosystem is built on invertebrates," Triplett said, while peering at baby stick insects in the pavilion's rearing room. "We need to teach people about the importance of these animals and the importance of conserving them, because they're the basis of the whole ecosystem globally."

The CSU System and Butterfly Pavilion seek to do just that through upcoming collaborations, said Mary Ann Colley, vice president of science and conservation at Butterfly Pavilion. Already, the pavilion

annually offers 46 college internships, which often are held by CSU students. University faculty serve as research associates and advisers for the facility, while pavilion scientists mentor CSU graduate students.

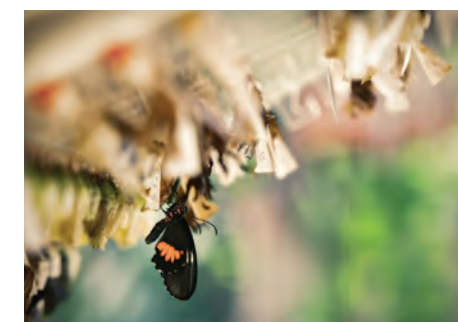
Other joint efforts are on the horizon, with construction of the CSU Campus at the National Western Center, which is set to open in 2022 with year-round teaching, research, and public education focused on food, water, sustainability, and human and animal health; at the same time, Butterfly Pavilion is planning a new \$30 million facility in Broomfield for expanded research and conservation work that is sure to provide additional opportunities for collaboration, Colley said.

Pavilion scientists are consulting with CSU to create a pollinator district — designed to attract and provide ample food sources for pollinating insects — at the forthcoming National Western Center. The two organizations also plan to cooperate on a bioblitz, or biological survey of plants and animals, prior to campus construction at the National Western Center.

Meantime, Triplett will continue guiding about 20 college interns per year in research and other projects related to invertebrate care. For instance, her group is developing zoo protocols for reproducing *Grammostola rosea*, the rose hair tarantula, which is often dubbed "Rosie." At Butterfly Pavilion, Rosie is a top draw, and the facility has 92 tarantulas filling the role. The docile spiders take turns crawling over the hands of visitors and introducing them to the value of invertebrates.

It's a source of pride for Triplett that, in the course of earning their "I held Rosie!" stickers, countless children in Colorado and beyond have learned something about the little animals serving vital roles in the ecosystem.

"They know something about invertebrates because we're here," she said, smiling. ♦



Sarah Triplett, an alumna who personifies the growing partnership between the CSU System and Butterfly Pavilion, displays hundreds of butterfly chrysalids at the center in Westminster. Photography by Mary Neiberg

TEAM PLAYERS

STUDENTS SCORE CAREER GOALS WITH COACHING FROM THE DENVER BRONCOS SPORT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

Aspiring to be general manager for a team in the National Basketball Association – it's a big ambition. Then again, ambition, by definition, is supposed to be big.

For Trevaun Arnold, the desire to work for an NBA franchise formed after he grew up in Metro Denver and graduated from Bear Creek High School, a three-sport standout in basketball, football, and track. He had offers to play small-college football but opted to attend Colorado State University and major in business administration, with no athletics aspirations beyond attending Rams football games and playing intramural hoops.


Still, it's a leap from arriving on campus – a first-generation student with a mini fridge, a duffel bag of clothes, and hundreds of questions about the future – to developing the dream of becoming an executive in pro basketball. Arnold's plan coalesced through his love of the game, his growing knowledge of business, his exposure to opportunities in sports management, and a deep consideration of personal values – with a critical assist from an academic institute formed four years ago on the campus in Fort Collins.



Christopher Stark / Denver Broncos

BY JOE E. CERVI

Photo by Mary Nebberg



"THE SPORT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE HAS PREPARED ME FOR A FUTURE THAT I SEE MYSELF IN. I WANT TO WORK IN THE NBA, AND I BELIEVE I HAVE THE SKILLS TO MAKE THAT DREAM COME TRUE."

— TREVAUN ARNOLD, STUDENT

Trevaun Arnold graduated in May 2019 with a major in business administration and a minor in sports management from the Denver Broncos Sport Management Institute.



Matthew Swiren / Denver Broncos

“OUR PARTNERSHIP IS A GREAT WAY FOR THE CSU SYSTEM TO JOIN WITH THE BRONCOS, ONE OF OUR STATE’S MOST RECOGNIZABLE AND REPUTABLE ORGANIZATIONS, TO DELIVER MORE VALUE TO COLORADO THROUGH THE DOORWAY OF EDUCATION.”

— TONY FRANK, CSU SYSTEM CHANCELLOR

Smart and personable, Arnold, at 22 years old, is a self-proclaimed seeker, always looking for the next piece to his life’s puzzle. Maybe that’s why a flier hanging in the Lory Student Center caught his eye as Arnold hustled between classes during his first year on campus. “It was about an organizational meeting for the Denver Broncos Sport Management Institute,” Arnold recalled. “It was a blessing. I don’t know why I even looked at it, but I knew right when I saw it that it was going to be the path I took.”

Arnold soon enrolled in the institute designed to help students score careers – not as athletes, but in front-office and other managerial roles critical to the sports industry, whether pro sports franchises, college athletics, amateur and youth sports, or organizations focused on health, fitness, and recreation.

The Denver Broncos Sport Management Institute launched in Spring 2015 as the first academic partnership that pairs a top-tier research university and one of the world’s leading professional sports franchises to offer an interdisciplinary sports management curriculum. Students in the program graduate with a minor in sports management, which may be paired with virtually any academic major; that makes the minor an eminently flexible way to enrich and tailor preparation for a career in the sports industry. Each student completes a curriculum that combines



Matthew Swiren / Denver Broncos

classroom instruction with hands-on learning, highlighted by a 150-hour internship. The experiential opportunities come from the Broncos and other high-profile organizations in the sports industry, ranging from Vail Resorts to the Washington Capitals pro hockey team.

In the program’s first four years, 213 students have graduated with a minor from the Denver Broncos Sport Management Institute. As the institute approaches its fifth anniversary in Spring 2020, it is planning to begin offering a master’s degree – a promising sign of program growth on the horizon.

“Our partnership is a great way for the CSU System to join with the Broncos, one of our state’s most recognizable and reputable organizations, to deliver more value to Colorado through the doorway of education,” said Tony Frank, Colorado State University System chancellor. “We’re helping to create opportunities for students in a growing industry through a direct partnership with that industry, so students are learning precisely what they need to know to be successful right out of the gate.”

Given the exposure institute scholars have to the Broncos, it might not be surprising that some alumni are now working in public relations and marketing with the franchise. Other graduates have landed impressive entry-level jobs in other sectors of the sports industry: as coordinator of hockey development with the Los Angeles Kings, director of football

Institute alumna Carlee Craddock, facing page, led a tour of Broncos Stadium at Mile High while working as an intern for the organization. Above, Grant Larson completed a media relations internship with the Broncos before landing a full-time job.

"WE ARE GIVING STUDENTS A FIRSTHAND, CLOSE-UP LOOK BEHIND THE SCENES AND SHOWING THEM THAT THERE ARE CAREERS IN MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF FIELDS WORKING IN SPORTS MANAGEMENT."

— ALBERT BIMPER JR., ACADEMIC LEADER, DENVER BRONCOS SPORT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

Albert Bimper Jr. played football for the CSU Rams and Indianapolis Colts before his career as a university professor.



Photo by Mary Neilberg



Matthew Swiren / Denver Broncos

recruiting at the University of Southern California, and in front-office jobs with the Colorado Rockies, Mountain West Conference, and Fresno State Athletics, among other positions.

Sports management programs are flourishing at universities across the country, largely driven by the thriving sports industry. The North American sports market is expected to top \$73 billion by year's end, according to *Forbes* magazine. As universities develop programs to help students compete in the arena, the CSU institute is distinctive for its close affiliation with the Denver Broncos: In addition to offering practicums and internships, executives with the franchise have helped design curricula by providing insights about the knowledge students need to succeed. The organization's contributions are summed up in the institute's motto: "To study with the Broncos, you have to be a Ram."

For other indications of the institute's relevance, consider a few key facts about the Denver sports market. The Denver Broncos are ranked No. 23 on the *Forbes* list of the World's 50 Most Valuable Sports Teams of 2018. It is the only Colorado team on the list, keeping company with the likes of the Dallas Cowboys, Manchester United, and the New York Yankees. That standing is further notable because Metro Denver, with an estimated population of 3 million people, is much smaller than many cities

Olivia Knoll, facing page, often worked at Canvas Stadium on the Colorado State University campus while interning with CSU Athletics. Meanwhile, Megan Jordan, above, worked at Broncos Stadium at Mile High during her marketing internship with the Broncos.



Matthew Swiren / Denver Broncos

“THERE ARE A WHOLE BUNCH OF REALLY GOOD AND INTERESTING PROGRAMS OUT THERE. BUT I HADN’T SEEN ANYONE TAKE THE LEAP TO GO DEEPER IN THOSE ENGAGEMENTS WITH PROFESSIONAL PROPERTIES.”

– MAC FREEMAN, CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER, THE DENVER BRONCOS

with the highest-value sports franchises, a sign of fan interest and industry vibrancy here. In fact, Denver is known as one of the smallest cities in the nation to host teams in all of the big four leagues – the National Football League, Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association, and the National Hockey League – as well as Major League Soccer. Add in all the other Colorado organizations with ties to the industry, and the need for sports management expertise in the institute’s home state is clear.

Several years ago, as leaders with Colorado State and the Broncos began considering an academic alliance, they wondered how the two organizations could work in a new and different way to give students and the sports industry an edge. Gary Ozzello, CSU director of community outreach and engagement, who earlier worked for 35 years in university Athletics, was instrumental in bridging academia and professional sports.

“We asked, ‘What fills a need for our students and Colorado State University, as well as for the Denver Broncos organization?’” Ozzello remembered.

Mac Freeman, chief commercial officer for the Broncos, had the answer.

“There are a whole bunch of really good and interesting programs out there. But I hadn’t seen anyone take the leap to go deeper in those engagements with professional properties,” Freeman said. “In one of our first meetings with some of the academic people at CSU, I was explaining that, ‘Hey, we’re close enough. We’ve got a lot of research projects that would be

great for students. We’re willing to create internships and willing to create things that give students unique assets.’ The only thing that is important to us, if we’re going to build this, is that we build a great program.”

Freeman and others wanted to reach for excellence, to create a sports management institute that, in his words, “might be the most unique program of its kind in the country.”

“We recognize our brand is special. That’s been part of Pat Bowlen’s tenure in ownership of this team,” Freeman said. “We have high standards. On the field we’re about championships, and we’re about being champions in the communities in which we live.”

Building a curriculum with those elite standards was not easy. Yet Colorado State had a faculty member with the credentials to serve as the institute’s academic leader: Albert Bimper Jr., a former center for the CSU football team in the early 2000s, who is now the university’s senior associate athletics director for diversity, inclusion, and engagement. He is also an associate professor of ethnic studies, and much of his research and writing has focused on cultivating meaningful opportunities for students in the sports industry.

“When we started, it was important that we had two topics – leadership and diversity – at the forefront of what we wanted our students to gather,” Bimper said. Before starting a career in academics, he played for the Indianapolis Colts and was part of the team’s Super Bowl XLI win in 2007.

“From a leadership perspective, we think it’s important that the students are thinking around their own self-exploration – who they are, what their values are, and how they fit within the organizations that they aspire to work within,” Bimper said. “In diversity, we want to show how sports connects us to diverse communities, diverse climates. We didn’t want to shy away from race, class, gender, and how historically in sports these always come up.”

Bimper said arming students with tools to compete for high-level jobs in the sports industry – in any industry, really – was paramount.

“I teach from the point of view that I wish I could have been a student in my own class,” he said. “That sounds egotistical, but it’s not meant to. I wish I could have been a student in this type of program because it opens up a whole new world. We are giving students a firsthand, close-up look behind the scenes and showing them that there are careers in many different types of fields working in sports management.”

The program is paying off for students. Grant Larson, an alumnus from the institute’s first cohort, wasn’t an athlete; he was a stats freak who thought a career in the number-happy world of sports would be paradise. Larson, 24, worked for the Rams’ sports information department and then interned in the Broncos’ communications department. Those experiences provided professional connections and immersed him in a work ethic that led to his job as coordinator of digital media, public relations, and marketing for the Denver Outlaws, the premier organization in Major League Lacrosse. It is no coincidence the Outlaws are owned by Bowlen, are a part of the Broncos family, and Freeman is the team president.

“The biggest thing I learned was what it takes to succeed in this field, and how hard these people work, and how devoted they are, and how if you keep working that’s how you succeed,” Larson said of the lessons he took from the Denver Broncos Sport Management Institute. “You kind of

Continued on Page 60



Ben Swanson / Denver Broncos

Institute alumnus Tyler Voigt, facing page, completed a marketing internship with the Broncos. Mac Freeman, above, chief commercial officer for the Broncos, believes close collaboration between the university and the football franchise will better prepare students for work in the sports industry.

Kiara Olson snorkels with sea lions at Los Islotes in Archipelago de Espíritu Santo.

Students from CSU-Pueblo visit Baja California Sur to learn about

ecotourism, and they discover even more while swimming with whale sharks and sea lions

DEEP FIND

BY COLEMAN CORNELIUS / PHOTOGRAPHY BY CARLOS AGUILERA



Mauricio Duran, above, a tour guide with Todos Santos Eco Adventures, discusses Archipelago de Espiritu Santo with a group from CSU-Pueblo. At right, students Kiara Olson and Clay Archer prepare to snorkel.

Aboard a boat called “Hot Pursuit,” 11 undergraduates and a professor were bound for a snorkeling destination in the Gulf of California, the sea that separates Baja California Peninsula from mainland Mexico. Jacques Cousteau, the late ocean explorer and father of scuba diving, famously called this sea “the aquarium of the world” for its dazzling diversity of underwater species. As the students from Colorado State University-Pueblo boated across the gulf in March, their faces sprayed with briny water each time the vessel hit a swell, they had an inkling of what was to come.

For weeks before their launch from La Paz, the capital of Baja California Sur, the students from Pueblo had considered the gulf, and the ecological and human complexities moored to it, as a case study in ecotourism. Yet reading about these tangled topics – environment, culture, economy – is nothing compared to experiencing their interplay. The students were here, using CSU Todos Santos Center as their basecamp, to immerse themselves in the branch of tourism that highlights sustainability,

with the goal of protecting natural resources and their multilayered values.

Ecotourism appealed to these students as part of their major studies in biology and recreation. They had learned about the field’s relevance to Colorado, which presents mounting challenges in balancing public access to nature with protection of wild places that attract throngs of visitors. In April, for instance, Glenwood Springs started a new reservation system to reduce hiker impacts at iconic Hanging Lake; meantime, Rocky Mountain National Park, which tallied a record 4.6 million visitors in 2018, has enacted progressively tighter restrictions on private vehicles in an effort to manage crowds.

Daniel Bowan, an assistant professor of recreation management and outdoor leadership at CSU-Pueblo, led the trip to Mexico and hoped a close-up view of conservation issues in an entirely different setting would help his students understand challenges at home. “We talk a lot about different uses of areas and what’s appropriate for those settings,” Bowan said, adding, “The more you see other ecosystems,



“It was pretty much the coolest thing
I’ve ever done in my life. This is definitely a life experience
I never thought I’d have. The fact we can **conserve**
this *and still* experience it
is what it’s all about.” —A.J. Cross, CSU-Pueblo student



Dive instructor Crissy Cappellano discusses fish species with A.J. Cross, Ray Hall, and Daniel Bowan during a picnic lunch at Isla Espiritu Santo.

the more your own makes sense to you.”

Yet, as Bowan knew from earlier expeditions, the Pueblo students would also benefit immeasurably from the adventure, self-discovery, and cultural exchange afforded by the weeklong trip to Mexico. These were among the key reasons for building the CSU Todos Santos Center, which is marking its fifth year of academic programming in a village on the peninsula’s southern Pacific Coast. They are also primary reasons Timothy Mottet, president of CSU-Pueblo, hopes all students on his campus will eventually have the chance to visit and learn here.

“The Todos Santos Center shows students that the world is our classroom,” said Bowan, who has led several courses in and around the center. “The highest form of learning is what we experience. Now these students will have this transformational experience that they’ll always draw from. They’ll be able to ask, ‘How does this transfer to other parts of my life? How do I carry it with me?’

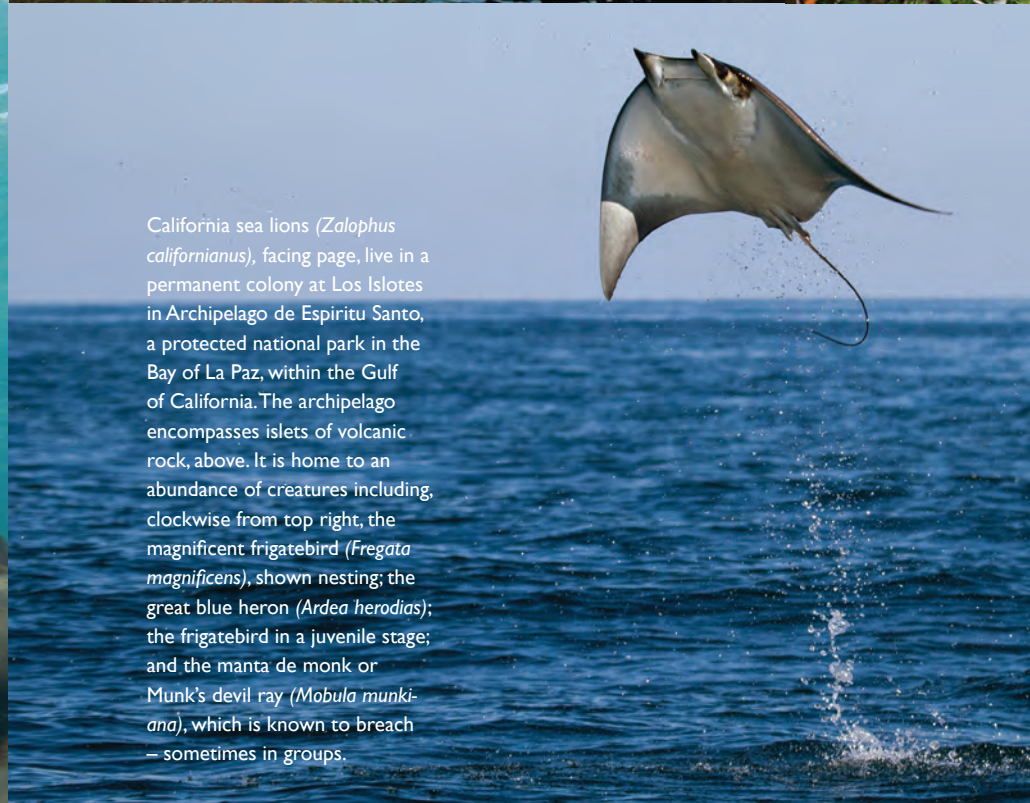
“Everyone will take something different from today,” he predicted.

As the students from Pueblo boated in morning sunlight, they soaked in their surroundings on the gulf, also known as the Sea of Cortez. They passed tiny islands, with crests covered in Mexican giant cactus, spiked arms reaching skyward as if in praise, and rugged volcanic flanks falling abruptly to crystalline waters. A pair of brown pelicans glided in formation over choppy waves. In the distance, a Munk’s devil ray breached the water’s surface and briefly outstretched its wing-like fins before splash-down.

“It’s not like anything I’ve ever seen,” said Kiara Olson, from Colorado Springs, a senior in biochemistry who wants to pursue veterinary medicine. “It’s absolutely astounding how much life is in the Sea of Cortez.”

Soon, the boat slowed as it approached a highlight of Archipelago de Espiritu Santo, a protected national park encompassing a series of islands, inlets, and stunning beaches. Ahead were Los Islotes, islets of purplish rock that anchor a year-round habitat for California sea lions. A permanent colony of some





California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*), facing page, live in a permanent colony at Los Islotes in Archipelago de Espiritu Santo, a protected national park in the Bay of La Paz, within the Gulf of California. The archipelago encompasses islets of volcanic rock, above. It is home to an abundance of creatures including, clockwise from top right, the magnificent frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*), shown nesting; the great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*); the frigatebird in a juvenile stage; and the manta de monk or Munk's devil ray (*Mobula munkiana*), which is known to breach — sometimes in groups.





Dive instructor Crissy Cappellano describes the whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) as A.J. Cross and Lilyana Lahti prepare to snorkel with the creatures. Whale sharks are harmless and feed on upwelling plankton in the Bay of La Paz.

300 sea lions resides at Los Islotes, which form a nursery protecting the animals from predatory orcas and sharks. It's also one of just two places worldwide, along with the Galapagos Islands, where visitors may swim with these playful underwater acrobats under controlled conditions. As if on cue, two sea lions popped up, their heads bobbing above water as the "Hot Pursuit" docked to buoys demarking a snorkeling zone. On the rookery, adult and juvenile sea lions luxuriated in the sun amid a chorus of barks, squeals, and yawps.

The students zipped their rented wetsuits, and gathered snorkels, masks, and fins as their tour guide, Mauricio Duran, provided instructions. Life vests were required, Duran explained, not so much for the safety of the swimmers, but to prevent diving and disruption of the sea floor. For the same reason, the number of boats allowed at Los Islotes was tightly regulated by the Mexican government; those allowed could not anchor, but tied to buoys. Duran sent each student into the 70-degree water with an enthusiastic, "Yi-hoo!" An hour later, they clam-

bered back into the boat, breathless and grinning.

"It was pretty much the coolest thing I've ever done in my life. It's like I was at home playing with my dog," said A.J. Cross, excitedly describing the mix of fear and delight he felt while face to face with a sea lion. Cross, who grew up in Fountain, south of Colorado Springs, hopes to work in a public park and had never been in an open-water setting beyond Lake Pueblo. "This is definitely a life experience I never thought I'd have," he said. "The fact we can conserve this and still experience it is what it's all about."

Next, the group cruised to a secluded cove for a midday break. "OK, guys, before we get out of the boat, remember this is a national park," Duran told the students, while looking across sparkling water to a breathtaking beach on Isla Espiritu Santo. "Take nothing but memories, leave nothing but footprints." He recited an international mantra for naturalists, attributed to Chief Si'ahl (anglicized as Chief Seattle), a leader of Native American tribes in the Pacific Northwest in the 1800s. The Archipelago

"I just saw spots, and I was like, 'Oh, my God!' Then I looked over, and I saw a tail." – Victoria Claudio, CSU-Pueblo student



The group from CSU-Pueblo visited Baja California Sur to study ecotourism in an environment that Jacques Cousteau called “the aquarium of the world” for its fascinating biodiversity.

de Espiritu Santo is a unique ecosystem not only for its marine creatures, Duran explained, but for endemic desert mammals, including the antelope squirrel, black jackrabbit, and ring-tailed cat. The protected area also provides critical habitat for myriad seabirds, including Duran’s favorite, the magnificent frigatebird. The frigatebird, which looks like a pterodactyl, is an aggressive thief that often snatches meals from other birds in midair; it is a study in contradictions as a seabird lacking waterproof feathers, meaning it can’t float and doesn’t dive for fish.

As students plopped on coarse white sand for a lunch of ceviche, roasted chicken in red chile sauce, and herbed potato salad, Duran pondered another contradiction: the twin pursuits of tourism and conservation, which are braided into ecotourism. Duran grew up in Mexico City and has worked for 15 years in the tourism industry in Baja California Sur. He applauded a governmental trend in setting and enforcing restrictions to protect the environment. “Preserving this region helps preserve my job,” said Duran, a guide for Todos Santos Eco Adventures. “If

we don’t preserve the ecosystem, then I’m shooting myself in the foot because tourism won’t come to this place. People want to visit pristine areas – that’s why I believe in sustainable tourism.”

As Duran chatted, a dive instructor used a guidebook to show students some of the fish species they had seen while swimming with sea lions: Cortez angelfish, rainbow parrotfish, and sergeant major, among them.

Those are but a few of nearly 900 fish species and other marine life, including coral reefs, whales, and sea turtles, found in the Gulf of California. With that abundance, the waters are critical to the fishing industry, producing large-scale shrimp, sardine, squid, and tuna catches, while also sustaining coastal communities that rely on small-scale, artisanal fishing. As the students from CSU-Pueblo were seeing firsthand, the gulf likewise is a major tourism draw, attracting nearly 5 million visitors each year and generating almost \$2 billion in annual revenue, according to an ecosystem and sustainability review published in the scientific journal *Progress in Oceanography*.

Continued on Page 63

“The Todos Santos Center *shows students* that the world *is our classroom*. The highest form of learning *is what we experience*. Now these students will have this **transformational experience** that they’ll always draw from. *They’ll be able to ask, ‘How does this transfer to other parts of my life? How do I carry it with me?’*” — Daniel Bowan, assistant professor, CSU-Pueblo



Like most CSU-Global students, Robert Nuñez is a busy professional who juggles work, family, and personal responsibilities along with his university course work. Nuñez, who is training manager at Haselden Construction near Denver, is pursuing a master's degree in organizational leadership through CSU-Global, hoping to help his company while also advancing in his own career.

CSU-GLOBAL PARTNERS WITH EMPLOYERS NATION-WIDE TO SPARK WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT THAT PAYS DIVIDENDS FOR ALL INVOLVED

working hand in glove

AFTER 20 YEARS AWAY from a college classroom, Robert Nuñez admitted he struggled when he started taking online classes toward a master's degree in organizational leadership from Colorado State University-Global.

"Let's just say, it took me a while to get back in the groove," said Nuñez, 49, training manager for Haselden Construction, a large Denver-area construction company.

But with encouragement and financial backing from his employer, including a scholarship to fully cover his \$6,000 tuition bill last year, Nuñez not only is an A student, he's well on his way to obtaining a master's degree that he views as an investment in himself and his company. After earning a bachelor's degree in communication in the '90s, his online graduate course work is helping Nuñez hone higher-level management skills to lead organizational change, establish employee policies, and analyze business budgets, among other responsibilities.

"It all comes down to looking for a way to improve my skills," he said.

By Bruce Horovitz / Photography by Tanya Bylinsky Fabian

WELCOME TO CSU-GLOBAL employer partnerships. This 12-year-old program – an outgrowth of the university’s two dozen degree offerings – extends to more than 1,800 affiliated businesses and organizations across the country and includes partnerships with some of the largest employers in Metro Denver, including the state of Colorado, Comcast, and Wells Fargo. These employer partnerships go to the heart of CSU-Global’s mission of providing flexible, high-caliber, and affordable degree programs for nontraditional students – primarily working adults – who seek university education as a route to career advancement. The emphasis on career relevancy is equally critical for workforce development and a healthy economy.

For this reason, employer partnerships have grown in number and scope since CSU-Global launched in 2007 as the nation’s first fully online public university with accredited degree programs. Together, the partnerships contribute 15 percent of CSU-Global’s total student enrollment, or nearly 2,900 students of about 19,000 enrolled, said Travis Coufal, senior director of engagement at CSU-Global. Students who work for employer partners receive a 10 percent discount on tuition, which provides an incentive for education that is often immediately applicable to work.

All involved benefit. “The employee gets skills that can help them advance in their career. The employer gets a better-trained and more engaged employee, and CSU-Global gets to help more students,” Coufal noted. In fact, the three-way gains prompted CSU-Global to offer a variety of options for its organizational partners. For instance, the university provides customized training for businesses and their employees, designed to fulfill specific learning outcomes. In another aspect of this nimble, partner-based approach to higher education, CSU-Global works with businesses, community colleges, and many other affiliated organizations to help students easily transfer previously earned college credit to bachelor’s programs at the university.

The numbers bear out advantages: 94 percent of CSU-Global alumni said the program contributed to their professional goals; 25 percent of alumni reported receiving a promotion; and one in five said they received a pay increase within one year of graduation, Coufal said.

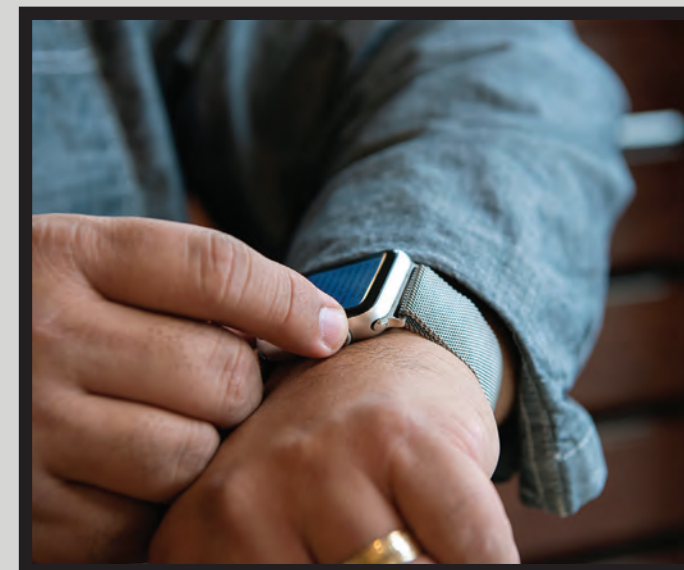
ASHLEY RONDON UNDERSTANDS the benefits – and rigors – of the academic course work made possible through employer partnerships. Rondon, 32, is a registered nurse who oversees daily operations at a dialysis clinic in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and has three children age 5 and younger. As she manages a part-time job and caring for her young children, Rondon is motivated to advance in her career, hoping to become a dialysis facility manager. Such a career move could mean an annual salary jump of up to \$20,000, she estimated.

And she has incentive beyond the bottom line. “I didn’t have strong female role models as a kid growing up, so I wanted to be that for my two girls,” Rondon said.

She’s pursuing a master’s degree in health care administration with support from her employer, DaVita, a health care company headquartered in Denver that is one of the nation’s largest operators of dialysis clinics for patients with kidney disease. DaVita picked up \$3,000 of Rondon’s tuition costs this year, she said. That has significantly cut her expenses, allowing her to anticipate graduation in June 2020.



Núñez, above, works at the Haselden Construction headquarters in Centennial, near Denver; the company is a CSU-Global employer partner and offers discounted courses through the online university as a perk of employment. Facing page: During his workday, Núñez leads training sessions for other employees at Haselden, pausing to check messages on his smartwatch as he hustles between appointments. As his workday ends, family responsibilities are just beginning when Núñez picks up his 4-year-old daughter, Ella, from preschool.



“I am very grateful to CSU-Global and the possibility for a busy, working mother of three small children to pursue my goals, dream big, and strive to be an example of strength, hard work, and perseverance for my children.” – Ashley Rondon, CSU-Global student



It's tough to manage graduate studies with other daily demands, whether it's spending time with his daughter or handling household chores, but Nuñez said he considers his master's course work an investment in his company, himself, and his family.

"I am very grateful to CSU-Global and the possibility for a busy, working mother of three small children to pursue my goals, dream big, and strive to be an example of strength, hard work, and perseverance for my children," Rondon said. She typically studies starting at 9 p.m., after her kids are in bed; when she has a big paper due, her husband handles parenting while Rondon does course work at a local coffee shop.

Rondon learned about CSU-Global offerings through her employer, but sometimes it's the other way around. Denver Health, one of the largest health systems in Metro Denver, discovered CSU-Global through employees who asked the organization to consider becoming an affiliate, said Rebecca Ellis, director of employee benefits at Denver Health.

Now, all employees are eligible for a 10 percent tuition dis-

count, and Denver Health is exploring ways to deepen the partnership with CSU-Global, Ellis said. In addition to the tuition break, Denver Health reimburses qualified employees up to \$2,700 for undergraduate course work through the university. Sixty-two employees are currently enrolled, she said.

ELLIS SAID DENVER HEALTH has benefited from the academic studies of its employees. For example, one student-employee completed a public health capstone project that offered demographic insights into employee leave from work. "That ultimately helped us to identify a trend and to identify policies to help them return to work," she said.

Tuition discounts that result from the partnership with CSU-Global are an attractive employee perk—especially important



With his daughter at his side, Nuñez, above, completes a CSU-Global class assignment toward his master's degree in organizational leadership. Facing page: As his wife, Elasha, collects their daughter, Nuñez is off to his final engagement of the day – playing clarinet during evening rehearsal with the Parker Symphony Orchestra.

for Denver Health, a not-for-profit company that can't usually pay wages above market rates, Ellis said. The 10 percent tuition discount ranks as a big employee benefit, she said, "and it didn't cost the organization anything in hard dollars."

THROUGH ITS PARTNERSHIPS, CSU-Global also awards class credit for some on-the-job employee training. In fact, under certain rigorous training programs, student-employees may amass up to 21 class credits toward a bachelor's degree; that can accelerate degree completion while further reducing costs for students, Coufal said.

For employers like Haselden Construction, the benefits of the CSU-Global partnership are realized on several levels – including, critically, employee retention. Beyond Nuñez, three other

Haselden employees are taking CSU-Global classes as a result of the employer partnership. "Those of us in the program realize what a gift this is that our company has given us," said Nuñez, who acts as a liaison between the organizations.

He hopes the knowledge he gains through his master's program will "help grow my department and help this company become what it's capable of becoming." More broadly, the partnership between Haselden and CSU-Global fosters a culture of learning and training that helps the construction company compete, Nuñez said.

The program also has an imprint on a personal level, through its positive impact on the lives of student-employees. Nuñez sometimes studies with his 4-year-old daughter, Ella, sitting on his lap, a reminder of the ultimate incentive for learning. "It's all about investing in yourself," he said. "You never know what the future holds." ♦

BUILDING THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTHWEST

PRESIDENT TIMOTHY MOTTET ENVISIONS A VIBRANT FUTURE FOR CSU-PUEBLO

TIMOTHY MOTTET PROMOTES THE NEED TO BOTH MANAGE AND LEAD. THAT MEANS HANDLING CURRENT OPERATIONS AND CHALLENGES, WHILE ALSO ENVISIONING AND ACTIVELY PLANNING FOR A WELL-DEFINED FUTURE MARKED BY GROWTH AND INNOVATION; IT MEANS TENDING TO CURRENT AND FUTURE STATES AT ONCE.

The philosophy has particular meaning at the institution he heads: Mottet is president of Colorado State University-Pueblo, a job he began in 2017 after holding top leadership roles at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville and Texas State University in San Marcos.

CSU-Pueblo was established as a community college in 1933 and became a four-year residential university in 1965. It joined the CSU System in 2003, and now has about 4,000 students pursuing bachelor's degrees and master's degrees in fields including business, communications, engineering, nursing, science, social work, teaching, and technology. This year, the university is launching its first doctoral degree program, in nursing practice, a benchmark that reflects a campus goal of offering more robust graduate programs designed to prepare students for high-level responsibilities in high-demand fields.

Yet the evolution of CSU-Pueblo into a regional comprehensive university – one that prepares students for professional careers in its region – has presented ups and downs, as occurs at every institution undergoing change.

Recent enrollment declines at CSU-Pueblo have resulted in an anticipated budget deficit of \$3 million in the fiscal year that

begins next month; that, in turn, has triggered difficult cost reductions, including hiring freezes and several layoffs from an employment base that includes about 500 full-time faculty and staff. Managing costs in the face of a deficit presents “a challenging time for everyone,” Mottet acknowledged in a letter to campus.

At the same time, Mottet is leading an ambitious plan for the future of CSU-Pueblo; when fully enacted, it would reverse current struggles. Unveiled last year, Vision 2028 seeks, in the course of a decade, to remake CSU-Pueblo as “the people's university of the Southwest” – a regional comprehensive university that will draw students from the Southwestern United States and deliver professionals back to the region ready to navigate work in a rapidly changing world. The vision recommits CSU-Pueblo to developing systems and competencies that allow students to have meaningful impacts on their work, families, and communities.

Vision 2028 includes new and retooled financial aid, academic support, advising, and general-education programs designed to boost student retention, graduation, and job placement on a campus whose enrollment comprises 35 percent first-generation students and nearly 50 percent minority students.

The plan also encompasses a web of close connections to high schools, area community colleges, and economic development efforts, reflecting the university's vital role in the region it serves. “Our new vision recommits us to people and community, which reflects our DNA and provides us with an opportunity to reimagine what a university and community can accomplish together,” Mottet said when he announced Vision 2028 last fall. “We want our partnership to reposition us in Colorado and the Southwestern United States, which is home to 90 percent of our students. It's going to take a decade to transform the university.”

As the plan unfolds, Mottet is working to build a culture that celebrates academic achievement. To that end, CSU-Pueblo in May brought graduation ceremonies back to campus after holding commencement for more than two decades at an events center on the Colorado State Fairgrounds; more than 5,000 people attended to cheer about 1,000 graduates. Graduation day, on the first Saturday in May, was a workday for all university employees (who had the following Monday off); commencement ceremonies were capped by an all-employee picnic. “We're trying to create rituals, ceremonies, and culture on this campus,” Mottet explained. “It's time for us to enjoy some of the pomp, circumstance, and traditions that higher education prides itself on. We need to celebrate the work we've done collectively.”

Continued

BY COLEMAN CORNELIUS PHOTOGRAPH BY MARY NEIBERG





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MOTTET

In a recent discussion with State magazine, Mottet described other important characteristics of CSU-Pueblo and Vision 2028.

STATE: What is the connection between Vision 2028 and CSU-Pueblo's classification as a regional comprehensive university?

MOTTET: Vision 2028 arises from that identity. We are working to transform CSU-Pueblo into the people's university of the Southwest within 10 years, a goal that, at its core, fully reflects our role as a regional comprehensive university. Regional comprehensives have often been called "people's universities" because they serve underrepresented populations and are historically focused on workforce development for specific regions.

I've spent my career at regional comprehensives, and it's truly inspiring to see the upward mobility of our students, in terms of their growth and what that growth positions them to achieve in their communities.

At CSU-Pueblo, there is an elegant connection between our university's role and our hometown because the Latin root of "Pueblo" means "people." So it's especially meaningful for CSU-Pueblo to reinvigorate its role as the people's university and to become a more forceful economic driver delivering knowledgeable and well-prepared graduates to our region.

STATE: What are some of the specific pillars of Vision 2028?

MOTTET: One of the most important is educational access and affordability for our students. We've got to be much more innovative about creating multiple access points and financial-aid opportunities to get students into higher education. This is fundamental in our ability to attract, retain, and graduate students. Financial aid is also critical to their ability to return to the region after graduation. That's because we're in a region with low median incomes. So students, first, must be able to afford higher education, and,

"I'VE SPENT MY CAREER AT REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVES, AND IT'S TRULY INSPIRING TO SEE THE UPWARD MOBILITY OF OUR STUDENTS, IN TERMS OF THEIR GROWTH AND WHAT THAT GROWTH POSITIONS THEM TO ACHIEVE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES."

—TIMOTHY MOTTET, PRESIDENT, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY-PUEBLO

second, must be able to pay off college loans, if they have them, in order to live, work, and raise families in our region. Of course, all of these issues are closely tied to regional economic development. To achieve that regional outcome, we've got to successfully address these interrelated issues of access and affordability.

Vision 2028 also seeks to create a unique set of experiences for our students. It is concerned with our campus environment, our physical spaces, infrastructure, and technology. And then, the fourth pillar driving the concept of people's university is professional development for our employees, which is also intrinsic to institutional health, the student experience, and regional vibrancy.

STATE: In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education designated CSU-Pueblo as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, meaning at least 25 percent of its enrollment is made up of Hispanic students. Why is that designation significant for CSU-Pueblo, and how is it connected to Vision 2028?

MOTTET: Our student population is now 34 percent Hispanic and close to 50 percent minority overall, a point of pride for us as a reflection of the demographics in our community and region. There are multiple identities and cultures wrapped into the term "Hispanic," but for us the designation is part of our ethos and our mission to serve all students from underrepresented groups.

There are more than 400 colleges and universities nationwide with the HSI designation, including several in Colorado. The designation is important in part be-

cause it makes us eligible for federal grant money to develop academic programs that help recruit, retain, and graduate Hispanic students and others with diverse backgrounds.

CSU-Pueblo currently has three such projects underway, funded by a total of \$10 million in federal awards. One program recruits students into STEM fields, with an emphasis on new and redesigned course work, hands-on research projects, and mentoring. Another has established a Center for Teaching and Learning, with innovative programs to promote academic success among students from underrepresented groups. A third creates important pathways between Pueblo Community College and our campus, which builds our entire ecosystem of achievement.

STATE: Vision 2028 also seeks to enhance community and regional connections through a concept described as "engaging place." What does that mean and why is it important for students and the region?

MOTTET: We want to embrace the defining characteristics of southern Colorado and the Southwestern United States, including our region's unique and sometimes difficult history, its rich and nuanced cultures, and its longtime focus on work and a strong work ethic. If we can help students more fully understand and appreciate this backdrop — this place — then we are adding value to their degrees and helping students build cultural competencies that will enrich their lives and advance their careers in our region. ♦



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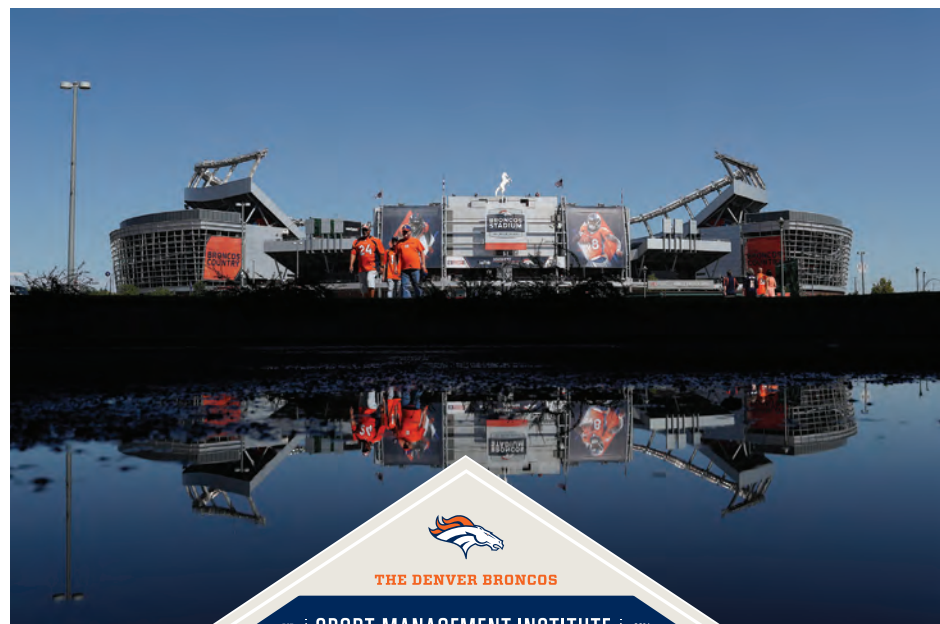
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BRONCOS *Continued from Page 35*



Ben Swanson / Denver Broncos

know right away if this is for you or not.”

Carlee Craddock, who interned with the Broncos alongside Larson, was attracted to the institute having been raised in a football family. She is the daughter of Dave Craddock, longtime football coach at legendary Pueblo Central High School, and all but grew up at Dutch Clark Stadium in Pueblo. “Football was all I ever knew. I literally was raised on a football field,” the 23-year-old said with a laugh. Craddock’s experience in the institute led her down a different path, to a job in the Corporate and Community Relations Department of Children’s Hospital Colorado. Yet she holds on to a core value delineated during her studies with the institute and affirmed through her internship with the Broncos.

“What I learned most is that you can make a real impact in communities while working for a professional sports organization,” she said. “You can use the brand to do good and give back. I realized that’s where my passion was, and it was through that opportunity that connected me with my current position at Children’s Hospital.”

Olivia Knoll, 23, grew up in Fort Collins and knew she would be a CSU Ram “from the first day that I could walk.” Last month, she walked across the commencement stage with a degree in hospitality management and a minor from the Denver Broncos Sport Man-

agement Institute. Through the program, Knoll worked as an intern with the CSU football program, helping with the ever-important recruiting process. Knoll said she’s confident in her skill set, having learned, among other lessons, that all victories are sweet. In a world filled with challenges, successes big and small should be celebrated, whether it’s completing a simple task or helping to land a standout player, she said.

“I have to keep reminding myself to be proud of my small accomplishments and to be aware that is what the world is going to look like,” Knoll said. “I don’t want to go in being ignorant in any way, so I keep reminding myself that it’s going to be a challenge.”

Arnold, the business major with his sights set on a management career in the NBA, likewise graduated last month and had several job interviews set up, including one with the Denver Nuggets. He, too, took self-confidence and self-awareness from his studies through the institute. “The Sport Management Institute has prepared me for a future that I see myself in,” he said. “I want to work in the NBA, and I believe I have the skills to make that dream come true.” ♦

The Denver Broncos are ranked No. 23 on the *Forbes* list of the World’s 50 Most Valuable Sports Teams of 2018.



Jenny Cavnar is the first woman to call an MLB game in 25 years. *And she’s proud to be a CSU Ram.*

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DEEP DIVE *Continued from Page 47*



This confluence of stunning biodiversity and socioeconomic pressures has vaulted the Gulf of California to the top of marine conservation watch lists. Since 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization has listed much of the gulf as a World Heritage site, signaling its status as a global priority for conservation.

How does that play out during a typical snorkeling adventure? Before their final water experience – swimming with whale sharks – the students were warned they could use only biodegradable sunscreen to protect the harmless, filter-feeding giants from potentially unsafe chemicals. The “Hot Pursuit,” like other boats, was bound by recently adopted speed limits meant to protect whale sharks from boat strikes as they feed on upwelling plankton; officials likewise monitored total boat and swimmer numbers to minimize feeding disruptions. Once the boat had permission to enter the feeding zone, Duran scanned the water for whale sharks, the world's largest fish species. The vessel pulled near a dark underwater mass, and Duran directed students to jump in and follow their dive instructor.

“Put your face in the water! Put your face in the water! Now, swim, swim, swim, swim, swim!” he shouted from the boat.

The students, disoriented by waves and snorkeling gear, did their best to obey; moments later, they surfaced, sputtering. They had been a matter of feet from a whale shark that Duran estimated to be 20 feet long. “Oh, man, we were right on top of it! That was awesome!” exclaimed Ray Hall, as he climbed back into the boat. “I just saw spots, and I was like, ‘Oh, my God!’ Then I looked over, and I saw a tail,” fellow student Victoria Claudio recounted incredulously, panting for breath. “I saw it! I saw it! Gracias!” cried Olson, the biochemistry major, as she rejoined the group.

That evening, the students from Pueblo regrouped for dinner at the CSU Todos Santos Center, about an hour's drive from La Paz.



Photo by Mary Nebelberg

At top: CSU-Pueblo students break for lunch at Isla Espiritu Santo. The group used CSU Todos Santos Center, above, during a weeklong trip to Baja California Sur. The five-year-old center hosts a growing number and variety of academic programs for the CSU System.

They gathered at picnic tables in a courtyard illuminated by strings of white lights. Others passed through, back from their own adventures: Veterinary students from the Fort Collins campus had spent the day working alongside Mexican veterinarians to vaccinate village dogs against rabies. A second student group from CSU-Pueblo, in the school's Chicano Studies Program, had toured local graveyards to learn about burial traditions and had seen artwork on the Malecón de la Paz, a seaside promenade in the capital.

The excursions represent a growing number of research, education, and service-learning programs based at the CSU Todos Santos Center – all designed to tackle local and international problems while helping students grow into informed global citizens. “These

DEEP DIVE

programs take cultural immersion to a new level,” Kim Kita, center director, said. In its first five years, the CSU center has logged nearly 1,100 student and faculty visits, each involving local residents or Mexican university students. The experiences, Kita noted, “allow students on our CSU campuses to more clearly reflect on their own cultures.”

And to reflect on their own lives, as the Pueblo students soon revealed. The day set aside for snorkeling was a highlight of the students’ weeklong trip, and they gained insights well beyond the topic of ecotourism.

P.T. Garcia, a standout wrestler at CSU-Pueblo, admitted he grappled with anxiety before jumping in the water with sea lions and whale sharks. “I’m not a very strong swimmer, and being out there in open water like that is something I’ve never done before. It reminded me of pushing yourself in athletics and pushing through your fears. I was so glad I did it,” Garcia said. As a senior majoring in recreation, Garcia wants to work with underprivileged kids; he’s gaining skills through a part-time job with

Upward Bound in Pueblo. The snorkeling excursion, Garcia realized, instilled empathy that’s essential in his work. “Getting out there today reminded me of being a participant and having those fears,” he said. “It gives me more perspective on what they’re going through.”

For Jordan Jimenez, a senior in recreation who works part time as a fly-fishing guide, the snorkeling excursion reinforced his view of outdoor adventure as a way to build human bonds. “It’s fun to come on these trips and totally immerse myself in the group. Everybody cares about each other – that’s my favorite part,” he said, recalling earlier student trips to Leadville and Moab, Utah. “I obviously care about natural resources, but I’m far more interested in people around me being happy and experiencing new things.”

Olson, the senior who wants to pursue veterinary medicine, described the day as pure inspiration. “I cried today – I’m not even kidding,” she said, her legs curled into a chair under a string of white lights. “I was so overwhelmed. It was amazing.” ♦

“I cried today – *I’m not* even kidding. I was so overwhelmed. It was amazing.”

– Kiara Olson, CSU-Pueblo student

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