Five questions for Frederic Bloom[1]

When Frederic Bloom, J.D., joined the faculty of the University of Colorado Law School at CU Boulder in 2012, it was a homecoming of sorts.

“I grew up in Colorado, long ago, and though I left the state for college without any clear plans to return, I’d always thought it would be wonderful to get back here eventually,” Bloom said.

After earning his law degree from Stanford Law School, where he graduated Order of the Coif, he clerked for the Honorable Sidney Thomas of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and for the Honorable Marilyn Hall Patel of the United States District Court for the Northern District of California.

“My path kept me away for a good long while, weaving back and forth between the coasts with plenty of stops besides, and I am grateful for each step along the way,” Bloom said. “But when a chance to join the faculty here emerged, I jumped at it. The University of Colorado is a special place in a special state. Amazing things happen on all four of CU’s campuses every single day. I am glad to be a part of the exciting, essential work this institution does.”

Bloom’s scholarship concentrates on issues of structure, method and design in modern federal courts. He teaches Civil Procedure, Evidence, Federal Courts and related courses. Earlier this year, he was named to the newest cohort of President’s Teaching Scholars[2], high recognition for excellence in and commitment to learning and teaching, as well as active, substantial contributions to scholarly work.

1. In creating coursework, you have traveled to the original sites of legal disputes and interviewed the individuals involved. How does this enhance your teaching?

One of the first things I did as a law student, way back when, was help a professor track down some of the key players in a somewhat (in)famous case about the use of statistical evidence. I wasn’t the most talented gumshoe, and I stubbed my investigator’s toe more than once. But I was exposed right away to the human element of the law – the expert witness who botched his analysis, the prosecutor who overplayed his hand, the defendant who paid the price. It was an unsettling lesson for a brand-new law student but also a gripping one, and it made the stakes of the cases I was only beginning to learn how to read feel significant, contingent and real.

I think it’s essential for my students to experience that feeling, too. I want them to remember, all the time, that what we’re learning about has real impact on real people trying to live real lives. Law school has a way of flattening human experience: People’s lives become their conflicts; those conflicts become cases; cases become names; and names become rules. All the while, the lives actually lived get smoothed over, condensed, erased. That’s probably inevitable in a semester jam-packed with challenging material. But I think it does a disservice to the people whose names we memorize and whose stories we use to build our lessons. I also think it hamstrings our understanding of the law. When we flatten the human side of things, we learn less than we might, so we know less than we should. That’s a plight we likely can’t avoid, sadly, but we can still acknowledge it and try to address it.

So when I speak to the songwriter in a prominent copyright dispute, for example, or visit the depot home to a famous railroad mishap, I’m trying to provide more than interesting background or intriguing context. I’m trying to reveal an often-elided side of the law.

And many people I contact are quite eager to share. The lawyers in familiar cases are often keen to explain their strategic choices. Their clients are often happy to discuss how they experienced the law on the ground. The law is a distinctly human enterprise: It is made by people, with people, for people. I sincerely believe that my students will be better attorneys, better advocates, better neighbors and better leaders if they remember that important fact. So I try as often as I can to connect the rules we’re learning with the people those rules impact.

2. You have served as an associate dean and have taken part in the evaluation of tenure and promotion cases via an advisory committee. Why is it important to you to take on these additional responsibilities?

Universities are remarkable places. Where else could you find an expert on, say, string theory just a building away from an expert on Romantic poetry or forensic accounting – with experts on French cinema and mechanical engineering right next door? It's astonishing, fragile and wonderful.

But it is not accidental. It takes vision, commitment and work. Some of that work happens at a departmental level by way of things like associate deanships. And some of that work happens at a campus level by way of groups like the Vice Chancellor's Advisory Committee. I've been fortunate to serve in both capacities, and while the work is often demanding, it is essential and often invigorating, too.

The university will remain a place of knowledge, learning, inquiry and excellence only to the extent it remains tangibly and unapologetically committed to those things. That's not an empty statement or abstract commitment. It reveals itself in the work of the people in the labs and classrooms and offices all across campus, and it reveals itself in our processes of mentorship and evaluation, too. We sustain the university by remembering and reinforcing what our commitments are. We protect our astonishing, fragile and wonderful community by devoting ourselves to it. And we encourage great and innovative and world-changing work by supporting and sustaining the colleagues who do it.

3. You were the featured speaker at the Law School's commencement ceremony last year. What was that experience like, and how would you summarize your message to the graduates?

It was a tremendous honor. To speak to a group of graduates as they stand at the world's door is an incredible prize and an indelible privilege. I will be forever grateful to the Law School Class of 2025 for entrusting me with the opportunity.

But it's also a serious challenge. I wanted to say something meaningful and memorable, but I didn't want to lose sight of the fact that no one was actually at the ceremony to listen to me. So I tried to speak to the graduates directly, candidly and unflinchingly. I spoke to them about the challenges of our often-unpopular profession, and I encouraged them to be conscientious about the power that they as newly minted lawyers now had. But even more than that – and in a way very different than the typically sunny, cheery, conquer-the-world stuff that fills most graduation speeches – I tried to be honest with them about how hard the world can be. We all struggle with something. We all fail sometimes. What we do with that fact, though, is what defines who we are.

I tried to suggest to the graduates that there is nothing braver, more heroic or more human than facing hard losses honestly and embracing small victories excitedly. I tried to say that there's nothing more important than trying your best even when trying your best seems inadequate. And I hoped to express to them that the greatest gift is not the victory, whatever it may be, but the chance to do just a little bit better today than you did yesterday. "Just keep going," as the great poet wrote. "No feeling is final."

4. What does it mean to you to be named a President's Teaching Scholar at CU?

There's an old quip – I think from Groucho Marx – about not wanting to be a member of any club that would accept me. I'm thrilled to flip that quip on its head here: I'm honored to be a member of the President's Teaching Scholars Program, and I'm delighted they accepted me.

One of my wonderful Law School colleagues, Helen Norton, was named a President's Teaching Scholar a number of years ago, and I know firsthand what a terrific teacher, scholar, mentor and colleague she is. I am excited and humbled to join all of the President's Teaching Scholars and to hold this important distinction. I will do my best to live up to the standard my Teaching Scholar colleagues have set.

A lot of incredible things happen at the University of Colorado outside of the classroom. Those things help make the university truly world class. But we are, fundamentally, a teaching institution, and the classroom sits at the heart of almost all that we do.

What that classroom looks like may be changing. Technology has reoriented our systems and disrupted our structures in profound and sometimes problematic ways. But the core of our enterprise is impressively durable: We are trying to connect with our students, to communicate with them and to teach them something meaningful in authentic and lasting

ways. I am grateful to be named among those who do that deliberately, devotedly and well.

5. What's next for your teaching and research?

If anything is true about the law, it's that things are always changing. Nearly every doctrine I teach has changed since I started teaching, often in substantial ways. It can be a sprint just to keep up, but a necessary one at that: I can't even pretend to teach my students the law without updating my own understanding at every turn.

That's part of the reason why I've now penned the primary textbook for two of my classes. It's also related to my commitment, enduring but especially urgent, to find ways to engage and support students who learn in different ways and whose educational paths involve less time in a classroom and a lot more time on the screen. (Folks who were in high school during the harshest days of COVID are filing into law school classrooms even now.)

The material I teach is also the material at the core of my research. I write about things like hearsay, character evidence and the Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction, and I often try to write about those kinds of seemingly disparate concepts at the same time.

Much of my research involves teasing out and highlighting threads that, while often overlooked, actually link doctrines together. (I've been working for quite some time on silence as a legally salient concept, for example.) This kind of eclectic, integrative work seems especially important in an era of political polarization and judicial interventionism. I hope it also helps me teach my students both the trees and the forest.

CU outreach tour highlights partnerships across southwest Colorado[3]
[4]

The University of Colorado's 2026 Presidential Outreach Tour traveled last week to southwest Colorado, bringing CU President Todd Saliman and Regents Ilana Dubin Spiegel and Elliott Hood to listen, strengthen relationships and explore new ways CU can serve the region. The tour also included UCCS Chancellor Jennifer Sobanet and representatives from across CU's four campuses, bringing a systemwide perspective to conversations with communities throughout southwest Colorado.

The Aug. 10-11 visits connected CU leadership with K-12 and higher education leaders, healthcare organizations, Tribal governments, businesses and community leaders. Conversations focused on creating educational opportunities that meet local needs while strengthening the region's workforce and communities.

"Like our name says, we are Colorado's university, which means serving all parts of the state," Saliman said. "We view these regular outreach tours as critical to maintaining and building relationships with communities statewide, raising awareness about the value of a CU degree and hearing directly from Coloradans about how we can help meet their needs."

A major focus of the tour was the growing partnership between Fort Lewis College in Durango and the CU Anschutz College of Nursing[5], which is expanding opportunities for students to pursue nursing careers while helping address healthcare workforce needs in southwest Colorado.

At the Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center[6], CU leaders discussed rural healthcare needs and efforts to develop a pipeline for future health professionals. The organization serves eight southwest Colorado counties through health career exploration, rural clinical rotations, Indigenous health initiatives and other programs. The center is one of six regional centers around the state coordinated by the Colorado Area Health Education Center, based at CU Anschutz. The hub and its centers support current and future health professionals who serve rural and underrepresented communities.

Those conversations led into one of the tour's signature stops: Fort Lewis College and the CU Nursing Fort Lewis College Collaborative[7].

Fort Lewis College President Heather Shotton welcomed CU leaders to campus, where they heard from students, faculty and local partners about the nursing program and the importance of creating educational pathways that allow students to train for high-demand careers while remaining connected to the communities they hope to serve.

The four-year undergraduate program combines the Fort Lewis College experience with the nursing curriculum and expertise of the University of Colorado College of Nursing at CU Anschutz. Students can earn a CU nursing degree, learning from CU faculty while remaining in Durango, creating a pathway for Four Corners students to train close to home and potentially remain in their communities after graduation.

The partnership launched in 2022 with philanthropic support from Durango nurse practitioner and CU Nursing alumna Karen Zink. Its first cohort arrived at Fort Lewis in fall 2023 and began nursing-specific coursework in summer 2025 and will graduate this academic year.

The program combines Fort Lewis' undergraduate experience with CU Anschutz's nursing expertise and incorporates perspectives relevant to rural and Indigenous healthcare. It is designed to prepare students for nursing careers and help address long-standing shortages of health professionals in rural communities.

CU leaders also met with leaders from the Montezuma-Cortez School District, where discussions centered on college pathways, educator recruitment and retention, and teacher preparation and professional development. Meetings with Durango business and community leaders focused on workforce development, economic opportunity and connections between higher education and the regional economy.
[8]

"As Colorado's flagship university, it is incredibly important for the University of Colorado to have a presence in all parts of Colorado," said Christian Reece, CU's Outreach and Engagement Regional Program Manager. "These outreach tours provide an opportunity to bring CU leaders to communities large and small, to better understand the opportunities and challenges that are impacting our school district partners, as well as local business and community leaders. The tours also provide a first-hand look at the concrete programs across Colorado within which CU plays a role."

For CU, those relationships reflect an ongoing commitment to serve communities across Colorado by listening to local priorities and working together to determine where university resources can make the greatest difference.

AI Sprint Grant recipients on helping math students use AI more productively[9]
[10]

Launched earlier this year, the CU system Artificial Intelligence (AI) Sprint Grant: AI for Teaching & Learning is focused on improving course outcomes using AI with goals of supporting and accelerating innovative teaching practices that leverage AI to enhance student learning.

The grant is designed to provide faculty with the resources and time needed to develop and implement AI-driven pedagogical strategies for the specific purpose of increasing student performance relative to the learning goals/outcomes of a single course. The 'sprint' structure is designed to meet the pace of AI evolution, and in doing so, foster an environment of experimentation and growth with meaningful, of-the-moment outcomes toward improving student learning.

To learn how to apply for the next round of Sprint AI Grants[11], please see details at the end of this feature.

Among the projects receiving grants earlier this year was "Using MathGPT.ai to Enhance Student Success in

Calculus," led by Diana White, associate professor, and Pamela Whitten, senior instructor, of CU Denver's Mathematics and Statistical Sciences Department. The project will integrate MathGPT.ai into Calculus I at CU Denver to address high rates of unsuccessful course completion in a key gateway course for STEM and other quantitatively intensive fields.

Q&A with Diana White and Pamela Whitten

Q. What initially inspired you to apply for the AI Sprint Grant?

A. White: Calculus I has historically had a high DFWI (grade of D or F, withdraw or imcomplete) rate. I've attempted to moderate this for several years in the hybrid (online, asynchronous, but with in-person written exams) version of the course. Despite significant research-based modifications, student performance was not improving. I wanted to explore whether AI could provide individualized support to students.

I had also worked on an NSF proposal involving MathGPT.ai, so I was already familiar with the platform and how the embedded AI tutor works. Rather than producing solutions (in fact, it will not solve the problem), it asks questions and guides students through the reasoning needed to solve each problem. That's much closer to how we want students to learn mathematics.

Q. Can you describe your project and how you hope using AI will help students achieve the learning outcomes in your course?

A. White: We are replacing our current online homework system with MathGPT.ai, which is built around the same OpenStax textbook we already use. Students still complete homework online, but now they also have access to an embedded AI tutor that can guide them through problems whenever they get stuck. The tutor is available 24/7 and provides instant support. Our goal is to determine whether this kind of immediate, scaffolded support leads to stronger learning and improved success in Calculus I.

Whitten: As the Calculus I course coordinator, I've seen the course evolve from using written homework to online homework platforms, then to OER, and now toward the AI component. Staying current with that shift should benefit students, especially once they learn how to use the tool properly.

Q. What ideas, research, or experiences have influenced your approach?

A. Whitten: After teaching Calculus I for decades at both the high school and university levels, I've noticed that students generally are already using new technology and are generally up to speed on it. I think getting them to take what they already know how to do and enhance it so that they use it better is a good thing, and it should help improve their success.

White: A key idea for me is productive struggle. Students need to get to the point where they are stuck and then work through how to get unstuck, and the AI tutor is designed to help with that. The tutor can help narrow down where they need support.

I also think about active learning, which we know greatly enhances student learning. Today, students seem to have fewer study partners and study groups, so they lose some of that mathematical interaction. Talking to a chatbot is not the same as talking to another human, but it is still interaction about the mathematics, with students being asked to articulate their progress and their understanding of where they are in working through a problem.

Q. What AI tools are you planning to use and what led you to choose those particular tools?

A. White: We considered building our own AI solution, as some faculty both locally and nationally have done, but we ultimately concluded that a dedicated platform was more sustainable. MathGPT.ai already integrates with our textbook, has ongoing development and technical support, and is being used by many institutions. We are not software developers, so rather than developing a basic tutor that is separate from the online learning management system, and then needing to maintain and enhance that tutor, we preferred to evaluate a platform that could realistically be adopted

more broadly if it proves effective. The future of AI tutoring in mathematics is probably not a bunch of separate one-off systems developed by individual faculty members. It is more likely to be something that a company or open-source group develops and continually improves.

We decided to go that direction and wrote the grant to pilot it this summer. We have already been using it for about a month or two, which has helped us work through the setup before the fall.

Q. How will you know that your project has been successful? What evidence will you look for to understand its impact on student learning?

A. Whitten: We are definitely looking at DFWI rates. While we cannot completely attach that to the AI component, we are already noticing a positive difference this semester using the MathGPT.ai platform.

White: We'll compare DFWI rates and performance on exams, including the common final administered across all Calculus I sections. Because every section takes essentially the same final using the same grading rubric, it provides a useful comparison across sections, modalities, and instructors.

We'll also analyze how students actually use the platform, examine relationships between AI use and performance, and survey students about their experiences. Together, these data should give us a much richer picture than grades alone.

More broadly, I hope we learn not only whether AI improves outcomes, but also how to teach students to use it effectively as part of the learning process rather than as a shortcut.

Q. What are you most excited about? What are you uncertain about?

A. Whitten: The uncertainty for me is whether using the AI platform will make a difference. I am hoping it will. I am excited for students to use it and try something new.

White: I am excited to see if the AI tutor can genuinely improve learning rather than simply make work easier. If we can identify ways AI can be infused in courses to support students in becoming stronger mathematical thinkers, then those lessons could extend well beyond this one course. I also am excited to keep tweaking our use of the platform and to think through how to support students in using AI productively so that it moves their learning forward.

My biggest uncertainties are whether improvements will be present, detectable and attributable to and for which students this support makes a detectable difference.

Q. How do you envision your project being adopted or adapted by instructors in other courses or even other disciplines?

A. White: Independent of the AI tutor, I like the MathGPT.ai interface and setup better than the MyOpenMath one, and in theory we could switch to it more broadly. We also ended up getting free access for the entire department for the semester, which makes it easier to explore. The main challenge after that is cost and how to keep materials affordable for students.

Whitten: From a course coordinator's perspective, the interface is much more user-friendly. It is easier to set up and easier for one instructor to copy a course from another instructor without having to start over from scratch. That kind of workflow could make it easier for others to adopt.

White: If the results are positive, I think the model could transfer readily to other introductory mathematics courses and to disciplines that rely heavily on guided practice and frequent feedback. One advantage of using a commercial platform rather than a custom-built system is that other instructors could realistically adopt it without developing their own AI tools.

We also plan to share what we learn through venues such as COLTT, the Rocky Mountain Section of the Mathematical

Association of America, and potentially practitioner-focused publications so others can build on our experience.

How to apply for the next round of Sprint Grants

The CU system Office of Academic Affairs, in partnership with the Office of the President, invites faculty to apply for a systemwide grant recognizing and supporting innovative uses of artificial intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning across all CU campuses. These grants are not specific to any single AI platform or tool.

The **CU System Sprint Grant: AI for Teaching & Learning** is focused on improving course outcomes using AI with goals of supporting and accelerating innovative teaching practices that leverage AI to enhance student learning. This grant is designed to provide faculty with the resources and time needed to develop and implement AI-driven pedagogical strategies for the specific purpose of increasing student performance relative to the learning goals/outcomes of a single course. The 'sprint' structure is designed to meet the pace of AI evolution, and in doing so, foster an environment of experimentation and growth with meaningful, of-the-moment outcomes toward improving student learning.

This fall 2026 call for proposals represents the second of three sprint grant cycles.

Eligibility: Tenured or tenure-track faculty and full-time and instructional series faculty are eligible to apply.

Amount: Up to $20,000 and may be used to cover project expenses, which can include support toward one course buyout.

Deadline: Apply by Oct. 16, 2026.

Grant details[11] **and past recipients**[12]

Leave-eligible employees must certify paid leave balances by Aug. 31 [13]

CU Boulder celebrates opening of Code Talker Hall [14]

UCCS AMP lab investigates muscle health across the lifespan [15]

University of Colorado, Denver city leaders unveil Independence Plaza's future as a CU Denver, DEDO hub for students, innovation and industry [16]

Why are teens asking AI to rate their faces? [17]

Federal update: Senate CR and UG delay, more[18]

From Aug. 14, this update from CU Federal Relations and Counsel includes information on Senate CR and UG Delay, DOJ In-State Tuition Lawsuits, DOJ Harvard Lawsuit Dismissal, Union Lawsuit Over ED Grad Degree Definitions, and EO on Childhood Vaccinations.

Click here to read the post.[19]

From Aug. 7, this update from CU Federal Relations and Counsel includes information on Released Senate CR Text and OMB Uniform Guidance Delay, ED National Call to Action, EPA Blocked from Rescinding Climate Grants, and Schwartz Confirmed by Senate as CDC Director.

Click here to read the post.[20]

For the latest communications and federal memos, please visit the CU System Federal Updates and Actions[21] page.

CU Connections resumes weekly publication[22]

With today's issue, CU Connections resumes its regular weekly publication schedule for the 2026-27 academic year.

New editions are scheduled for publication each Thursday throughout the year. During the summer, new editions appear every other week.

Connections will not publish new issues on Nov. 26 (Thanksgiving), Dec. 24 and Dec. 31.

Deadline for submissions is noon Friday before each Thursday's publication.

Questions: Contact CU Connections, connections@cu.edu[23].

Niswander awarded 2026 Edwin G. Conklin Medal [24]

Sikora named a National Academy of Medicine 2026 Fellow [25]

Grubbs recognized for championing collaboration, joy on advancement and engagement team [26]

Programming, partnerships and outreach expand to fill gaps in health care workforce[27]

CU Anschutz trial finds semaglutide pills curb alcohol use disorder[28]

Celebrating 5 years with ‘The Cause’ at CU Boulder with music that helped shape history[29]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/five-questions-frederic-bloom[2] https://www.cu.edu/ptsp[3] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-outreach-tour-highlights-partnerships-across-southwest-colorado[4] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/outreach_lede_crop_08-20-2026.jpg[5] https://nursing.cuanschutz.edu/[6] https://swcahec.org/[7] https://nursing.cuanschutz.edu/degrees-programs/undergraduate/flc[8] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/outreach_christian_group_crop_08-20-2026.jpg[9] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/ai-sprint-grant-recipients-helping-math-students-use-ai-more-productively[10] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/white_whitten_sprint_ai_new_crop_08-20-2026.jpg[11] https://www.cu.edu/oaa/cu-system-sprint-grant-ai-teaching-learning[12] https://www.cu.edu/oaa/grants/ai-sprint-grant-ai-teaching-learning/ai-sprint-grant-ai-teaching-learning-past-recipients[13] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/leave-eligible-employees-must-certify-paid-leave-balances-aug-31-1[14] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-boulder-celebrates-opening-code-talker-hall[15] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/uccs-amp-lab-investigates-muscle-health-across-lifespan[16] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/university-colorado-denver-city-leaders-unveil-independence-plaza-s-future-cu-denver-dedo[17] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/why-are-teens-asking-ai-rate-their-faces[18] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/federal-update-senate-cr-and-ug-delay-more[19] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-update-81426[20] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-update-8726[21] https://www.cu.edu/office-government-relations/federal-relations/federal-updates-and-actions[22] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-connections-resumes-weekly-publication-9[23] mailto:connections@cu.edu[24] https://connections.cu.edu/people/niswander-awarded-2026-edwin-g-conklin-medal[25] https://connections.cu.edu/people/sikora-named-national-academy-medicine-2026-fellow[26] https://connections.cu.edu/people/grubbs-recognized-championing-collaboration-joy-advancement-and-engagement-team[27] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/programming-partnerships-and-outreach-expand-fill-gaps-health-care-workforce[28] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/cu-anschutz-trial-finds-semaglutide-pills-curb-alcohol-use-disorder[29] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/celebrating-5-years-cause-cu-boulder-music-helped-shape-history