Five questions for President Mark Kennedy[1]
[2]

Mark Kennedy became the 23rd president of the University of Colorado in July 2019. He came to CU after successful careers in business, government and higher education.

Since taking the helm at Colorado's flagship university system, he initiated a strategic planning process, Leaning Into the Future, which is just over half complete. He has met with shared governance groups across the system, hundreds of donors and dozens of state and federal elected officials. Kennedy initiated two significant assessments of major CU activities, online education and technology enablement. He has visited communities across Colorado, from the Western Slope to the Eastern Plains.

Kennedy and his wife, Debbie, are first-generation college graduates.

1. Now that you're eight months into your presidency, what are your impressions of the University of Colorado and the job?

The more I learn about CU, the more impressed I am. How many other universities offer top-notch liberal arts programs on three academic campuses? How many have a world-class academic medical center where first-rate education, research, clinical care, and medical discovery are the rule, not the exception? How many could build a satellite for the United Arab Emirates that will be launched in Japan? How many have an urban research university that not only provides a highly diverse student body with a quality education, but also is a leader in urban dynamism? How many are helping lead the charge for Colorado to become the nation's space capital while also breaking new ground in cybersecurity and serving the entire southern part of the state?

Bottom line, CU is a great university.

It offers something for virtually every learner across four campuses, and we also play a critical role in Colorado's quality of life and economic vibrancy. We're also addressing issues critical to society, including health care, diversity, space, cybersecurity, sustainability and the future of cities. Perhaps most important, we provide a high-quality education and graduate more than 15,000 students each year. They are the highly skilled workforce Colorado needs.

As for the job, I've had the chance to meet many people inside and outside CU and what they have in common is a deep well of good feeling about the university. I haven't met every major donor or every legislator or every accomplished alumnus, but I'm working hard to connect with people.

Debbie and I are also enjoying getting to know this great state. We've been to the Eastern Plains and Western Slope and points in between. My only complaint thus far is the lack of guardrails on the harrowing parts of Red Mountain Pass.

We have a great team at CU in system administration and on the campuses and I have appreciated their collaborative and innovative spirit.

Underlying all of what we do at CU is an entrepreneurial nature and spirit. It's really the spirit of the West. Our forebears discovered silver and gold, and we continue their legacy by mining rich veins of learning and discovery.

2. Are you pleased with the progress of the strategic planning process? What do you expect the result to be?

We're a little more than halfway through the process, and I'm pleased with the progress and participation in strategic planning[3]. It has been great to get input from shared governance, from faculty, staff, students and alumni on each campus, as well as members of the business and nonprofit communities. The hard work by the working groups that are diving deep into defining the details of the plan is bearing fruit. We have articulated and refined metrics we will strive to achieve, and they are developing action steps next.

We have the right areas of focus, which include things like graduation rates, diversity, mental health, research, among

others. They are topics that you and I find important each and every day. I hope the shared vision for the future that will emerge from the plan will help us make accelerated progress in important areas. It will also help us focus our resources, which is important since we will likely face an economic slowdown at some point in our future.

I'm also thrilled with the leadership of CU Boulder Business School Dean Sharon Matusik and system CFO and Vice President for Finance Todd Saliman as co-chairs of our planning effort. They've been ably assisted by Associate Vice President for Strategic Initiatives Angelique Foster.

The way things are coming together, I'm confident we'll meet our deadline for presenting a draft plan to the Board of Regents in July. Then we will continue widespread conversations around implementation.

3. CU is working with external partners on two significant assessments of key capabilities that are in process – online education and technology enablement. What progress is being made and what do you expect going forward?

Having interned at Eastman Kodak, which lost the battle for photography's future after being flooded by the digital wave, and then my time in retail, where clicks replaced bricks and retailers struggle to survive, I have observed firsthand that it is only by leaning into a digital future that entities survive, much less prosper.

In online education[4], the top 15 online public universities grew by 10%; the next 50 grew by 2% and those below that are flat or shrinking. CU can be in the top group only by an aligned effort with a common focus. Otherwise, it's not sustainable. We're not focused on chasing the large national players, but we must have the capabilities to meet our mission and to compete. We must ensure we are at a sustainable scale. CU awards 40% of on-campus degrees in Colorado but only 10% of online. Consistent with our entrepreneurial spirit, our strategy must not only ensure competitive scale online, but also lay seeds for a future not predicated solely on degrees and credit hours.

Regarding technology enablement[5], we have to find a path to added functionality. Things like a constituent relationship management (CRM) platform, data analytics and artificial intelligence are critical to our future. We need to be at the forefront of embracing technological advances by finding efficiencies where differentiation by campus is not necessary so we can make investments in new capabilities that will empower faculty, staff and students. We have quality IT teams around the CU system with great staffs. Each campus needs to focus on its unique needs, but we also need to consider the common functions we can do once instead of four times.

I recognize that this will require cultural change and that such change is hard. We have to preserve the entrepreneurial culture vital to the university. It depends on always striving to sharpen the unique focus of each campus in delivering learning and discovery while encouraging collaboration when it benefits our combined impact.

More coordinated support functions will be essential to our vitality. You can only be entrepreneurial if you empower people on the front end of learning and discovery. But we can only give them the support they need by being coordinated on common functions. The project will help us determine how best to deploy and invest in our people.

4. Given the potential scope of change in those two areas, do you anticipate that change to be incremental or more fast-paced?

Any changes resulting from these two efforts will be phased and sequential. We're paying attention to many of the lessons learned from the Elevate project to ensure we are successful. Those lessons tell us we need a systemwide steering committee and defined project leads. We need a robust risk assessment. We need a dedicated project manager. And we need to communicate and gain input. We're still in the early stages for each of these two projects, so activities will pick up steam rapidly.

5. You and your wife, Debbie, are relative newcomers to Colorado. What have you most enjoyed about your new home?

Like many transplants to Colorado, we have found this among the most welcoming places we have ever encountered. Although given our heritage in Minnesota, we're still waiting for winter. Debbie describes Colorado winter to our friends

in Minnesota as winter in the morning, spring in the afternoon.

We have delighted in discovering some of Colorado's cultural attractions, including museums, plays on our campuses and in communities. We've also attended many sporting events. We've been fortunate to travel some of the most beautiful parts of the state and to meet many wonderful people. Coming from the land of 10,000 lakes to a state with majestic mountains and expansive plains, Debbie and I realize we have been fortunate to live in places that are geographically blessed.

We love the state, love the people, and we love CU.

CU Faculty Voices: Try these tech tools to support student learning[6]
[7]

Editor's note: This is one in a series of commentaries[8] by CU faculty, presented by the Faculty Council Communications Committee and CU Connections. Learn more here[9] and submit your own column pitch.[10]

By Kathia Ibacache
[11]

There is always a first time for some things. This is how I felt the first time I tried the coding robots Wonder and Ozobot. I had to train a few of my colleagues on the use of this technology at a public library and I had insufficient knowledge about coding or robots. Thus, I set myself to the task, spent many hours on Hour of Code and other free coding websites, and more time with YouTube videos and playing with the bots themselves. These were the first steps I took. Later, I would acquire deeper knowledge with this technology as I taught it to children, my target audience at the time.

I grew up in another country with no access to computers or any other technology until I was in college. In fact, the first time I had a computer at home or even owned a personal phone I was in my 20s. Now, as a Romance languages librarian, I see students in the classroom, and I think of ways to stimulate their learning. I think of the benefits of educational exposure to new technology tools and more concretely breaking the habit of thinking, "I will not try that technology because I have never used it." As faculty, have you considered a technology tool to stimulate learning?

My target audience has changed. Now I teach research seminars and information literacy to undergraduate and graduate students from the Departments of Spanish and Portuguese and French and Italian at CU Boulder. However, it is my belief that even when target groups are different, the cornerstone of an educator appears the same, encapsulated in the following question: How do we convey information and promote learning in an environment that will benefit the students and encourage their participation in the teaching and learning experience?

Here are some technological tools that you could use in your classroom to encourage participation and support your students' learning experience:

Trello[12] is a web-based project management application that could be used in teamwork assignments to manage projects and aid communication among users. The basic Trello version is free and has a friendly interface, where users communicate through boards. Within the board you may add cards that will allow you to attach documents, connect with Google Drive, create labels and add due dates, among other features.
[13]
[14]

Padlet[15] is another application that could be used to break the ice at the beginning of your lesson or for an interactive exercise. Padlet requires a subscription for a small fee (it used to have a free version, now you can obtain a teacher's subscription for $12 a month), but once you have one, your students can join the boards for free. In Padlet, you share the URL with your students, which will allow them to join your board and participate in an exercise or topic of conversation. Boards like this one help students participate without exposing themselves to the whole classroom.

Remember that some students are comfortable participating in classroom activities, while others prefer a more discreet approach. The padlet example below shows an exercise where students were asked to share related terms for the topics covered in the class. The students answered anonymously. This type of engagement allows student participation without exposing or embarrassing them.
[16]

Kahoot[17] is a game that could provide a fun learning activity for your classroom. This learning activity could be based on assessing your students' preexisting knowledge before you introduce a topic or to test whether your students remember concepts that were previously covered in class. You will need to sign up for a free account. Students can use any device to access it, go to Kahoot.it, enter the game pin number and access the game you created. Once all the students have entered the game you can start the game. The game is based on questions, where the student who answers first gathers the most points. In addition, you could also add a warm classroom moment by giving candy to the winner of each question.
[18]

Canva[19] is a user-friendly graphic design web-based tool. This tool could help your students create designs that could be embedded in PowerPoint presentations. Canva is an alternative tool to Adobe Illustrator [20]but, in my opinion, with a more friendly interface. In Canva, you can use templates to get you started, while Adobe Illustrator begins with a blank slate and interface that requires some time and effort to use. With the free basic Canva account, students can create flyers, banners, logos, posters, brochures and more using public domain photos offered by the program or uploaded by the user. Canva also allows you to manipulate text fonts and sizes, choose desired backgrounds and select grids, shapes, frames, charts, illustrations and lines, among others. Faculty could also use this tool to create graphics that could help students assimilate the topics covered in your lesson. The graphic below explains the research process for students who will be preparing a research paper for a class.
[21]

YouTube[22] videos offer an important opportunity to document relevant concepts or difficult topics covered in class. Several web-based educational organizations, such as MobyMax, IXL and Khan Academy, are prominent in supporting math and reading curriculums at the elementary, middle and high school levels. In the case of higher education, some faculty have created a YouTube channel to record parts of lessons or go over topics that are of interest to the lesson.

Creating a YouTube channel and recording a video is time consuming, but it is a technology tool that could generate great traffic and usability. Do you think this type of commitment could boost your chances for tenure promotion? Faculty at some colleges and universities make great use of YouTube by creating videos of recorded classes. YouTube is the place that people access to find information. For example, YaleCourses[23] offers short and extended videos on a variety of topics. Similarly, some librarians use YouTube videos to create short informational videos. To illustrate, the Memorial University Libraries[24] has an array of brief videos covering topics such as how to refine searches in the library's online catalog and how to cite using Chicago style.

Technology tools in the classroom may not automatically guarantee a meaningful learning experience, but they could provide opportunities for learning that may be worth trying. Regardless, technology tools might not satisfy the needs of all users. To illustrate, in a research paper about the use of language learning apps[25] I published in 2019, when 53 respondents were asked the reasons why they have not tried a language learning app, 32% stated a preference for traditional setting. Therefore, technology as a classroom tool may not be appealing to everyone. In your case, have you had a negative experience with a technology tool used in your classroom?

In addition, the economic gap may tarnish students' accessibility and learning possibilities. To minimize this gap, if classrooms are equipped to provide laptop computers to those students who do not have one, faculty may try to create classroom activities using any of the technology tools available.

As faculty we have some support, which may vary by campus. In my case, on the Boulder campus, I wanted to learn more about technology tools I could use in the classroom so I contacted ASSETT [26]and requested a student technology consultation. The other three campuses also have technology support: At UCCS, OIT offers the Teaching and Learning Management[27]; OIT at CU Denver and CU Anschutz[28] offer help through the Academic Technology and Classroom Support and Training. In addition, faculty have the University Libraries, which supports teaching and

learning through a wide array of resources and subject specific librarians.

Finally, the teaching and learning experience is constantly evolving. Therefore, I ask myself and other faculty: Are we encouraged to evolve with it or at least to be flexible enough to keep trying new tools that could make a difference in our students' learning journey?

Kathia Ibacache is an assistant professor and Romance Languages Librarian at CU Boulder. She earned her master's degree in library and information science from San José State University and her doctorate in musical arts in early music performance from the University of Southern California. Before coming to CU, she worked for six years in public libraries. Her research interests encompass teaching and learning technologies, collection development and the representation of Latin American indigenous languages materials in university libraries. She won an IMPART Award in 2019.

Staff Council hears latest on strategic planning process[29]

Encouraging the university community to offer feedback on the CU strategic planning process, President Mark Kennedy and Angelique Foster, assistant vice president of strategic initiatives, briefed the University of Colorado Staff Council on the plan's progress during the group's meeting Feb. 20 at 1800 Grant St.

Step one of the process – enumerating best practices in targeted areas – has been completed and summarized results have been posted at https://www.cu.edu/strategic-planning/executive-summary[30]. The report identifies best practices and opportunities for the future in four areas: affordability and student success; discovery and impact; fiscal strength; and diversity, inclusion, equity and access.

Nine designated working groups also have drafted proposed metrics to measure progress made in achieving cited goals. Those metrics should be finalized in the next few weeks, Foster said.

"Part of the challenge of any good strategic plan are the metrics, and some of these are difficult to define," Kennedy said. "Once that is done, the action steps will be directed toward moving that dial."

Step three in the process will be to define the action steps. Early in April, members of the working groups will get together to prioritize ways in which the university will move forward to achieve the agreed-upon goals.

Kennedy said he has scheduled time to discuss the draft plan with community groups, donors and other stakeholders before delivering it to the Board of Regents in July.

To offer feedback on the planning process, visit https://www.cu.edu/strategic-planning/feedback[31] or email CUStratPlan@cu.edu[32].

Kennedy also noted that the university is studying ways to improve its online education programs and uncover any internet technology inefficiencies to instead turn those issues into new capabilities.

Council members also received an update on university efforts to ensure compliance with the state's new Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, which will take effect Jan. 1, 2021. The law prohibits employers from paying a different wage rate for substantially similar work, with some exceptions. Anyone experiencing pay discrimination that violates the law has two years to file a civil lawsuit against the employer.

Despite federal legislation, women still earn significantly less than male counterparts. According to a March 2018 report by the Institute for Women's Policy Research and The Women's Foundation of Colorado, women in the state earn 86 cents for every dollar that men earn. Latinas earn 53.5 cents and black women earn 63.1 cents for every dollar earned by white men.

CU Boulder's Kym Calvo, assistant vice chancellor, compensation and talent acquisition, said a collaborative effort between all campuses is underway to define and categorize jobs, keeping in mind that employees in similarly named positions may not perform similar job duties, depending on the campus.

Currently, Calvo said, pay rate is often a campus or department decision, and the ultimate effect of the law might be more standardization across a campus or the system.

"This is an opportunity to make compensation make more sense, but we are challenged because this is a substantial amount of culture change in a short amount of time," Calvo said.

The task of defining "substantially similar" jobs is complicated by other factors, Calvo said, including the university system having more than 35,000 positions. "Higher ed has different employment categories and the solutions are different for each of these. The law doesn't think about that."

Other states have similar laws, but none match Colorado's new law. That means there are no precedents or examples to follow, Calvo said.

Netflix co-founder, Moms Demand Action founder, more headline 2020 Conference on World Affairs[33]

Fanfiction writers create new worlds where they feel at home [34]

Skop and Gibbes to tell stories of refugees planting new roots in U.S.[35]

New Jake Jabs Event Center celebrates grand opening[36]

In battle of the pancakes, powerful protein and whole grains win[37]

University of Colorado Cancer Center named National Pancreas Foundation Center of Excellence[38]

Dorrell named head football coach at Colorado[39]

Wilkerson named interim general counsel, secretary to Board of Regents[40]

Dan Wilkerson has been named interim general counsel and secretary to the Board of Regents.

He replaces Patrick O'Rourke, who this week became the chief operating officer[41] at CU Boulder.

Wilkerson previously served as general counsel and secretary to the board before his retirement from the university in 2012. He has been working part-time for the Marcus Institute of Brain Health at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus.

Wilkerson will officially start on Monday.

The Board of Regents will soon begin a search for the permanent position.

Sullivan works to solve growing problem of affordable housing in Denver[42]

Johnson named a global thought leader among top management professionals [43]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/five-questions-president-mark-kennedy[2]
https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/fac_cncl_kennedy.jpg[3] https://www.cu.edu/strategic-planning/[4]
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