Five questions for Melissa Zak[1]

Chief Melissa Zak (Photo: Patrick Campbell/University of Colorado)

Melissa Zak will tell you that being at CU-Boulder will help balance her family, personal and work life in ways that might never have happened had she stayed in Los Angeles. But that wasn't the only reason she chose after 20 years to leave the LA Police Department, where she was a captain overseeing gang and detective operations. She began to turn her attention to university policing after an incident on the University of Southern California campus.

"I had two college students killed in my division and I really thought that our college students – that age group in general -- are so vulnerable to the evils of the world just by virtue of the uniqueness of their age and lack of life experience," Zak said. She interviewed at several higher education institutions, including for the position of deputy chief at CU-Boulder. Little did she know that after she was hired by CU, her first crisis would be managing a flood. And after a short five months in that position, she was appointed chief in 2013.

"I didn't think that coming from a large municipal agency, even with my USC background, that a campus would ever look at me for a chief of police position because I wasn't battle-tested in a university environment," Zak said.

She's been tested in other ways and will use that experience to improve the department she has run for just over a year. Zak firmly believes that policing is all about building relationships and trust within her communities and her decisions reflect that. She has reorganized the CU Police Department, made efforts to connect with the 30,000 students and 7,000 staff and faculty at the university, collaborated with the city's police department and other entities, and is working to make CU officers "better public safety servants in protecting the people that work and live in and around CU."

When she's not serving as chief, you might find her sewing or playing golf – although so far, her free time has been limited – or watching CU's athletes perform. She especially loves watching the women's basketball team.

"Being at CU has been a whirlwind; it's been very trying, but I would never trade it. I love working at CU. I respect who we are and who we represent and I enjoy the opportunity and challenge that working in a flagship institution presents."

1. You've been at CU-Boulder for a year and a half. What are the most pressing issues that you deal with and what are some of the programs or policing measures you've instituted or plan to put into effect?

The most pressing issue was the flood. I was still deputy chief at the time. You know, I probably didn't do my homework very well. Who knew Colorado would have weather? Who knew Colorado would have a 100-year flood when I came in? But that was the eye opener for me, and also a focal point in terms of my leadership experience and my ability to demonstrate to campus leadership and the community and the department that I could run a big-phase incident and could work in collaboration with other campus entities. All of that basically allowed us to have no loss of life on campus during that time. By working together and having a set of objectives, we minimized the number of days campus was closed and minimized the damage to campus from the water and resulting debris. It was amazing how the campus community came together during that natural disaster. Everyone was a hero, but the group that really stood out for me was Housing (and Dining Services). My biggest fear was that during the four days the campus was closed, boredom would set in for our student body and we would have to respond to calls for alcohol overdoses or water-related slip and slides involving our students, and that those calls would take away life safety resources from someone else. But Housing did a fabulous job with programming for the students to keep them active, focused and involved and connected with their families who were worried about their well-being.

One of my goals is to make sure our campus police are prepared for any emergency on campus. What people don't realize is that sometimes officers don't come home. I had to make many death notifications in California, and I don't want to have to make any more. When I became the chief at CU, I told the officers that it was my job to make sure they have the best environment to work in and perform in, and the tools, training and support necessary to do their jobs. I take their safety very seriously because I understand the sacrifices they make as well as the sacrifices their families

make.

Back in July we reorganized the department and one of the things we created is succession planning in the three branches of the department -- police operations, support services and emergency management. This is where my city-side connections come into play. In any organization, you want to be training your next leaders. The way the branches were sectioned in the past, the majority of our commissioned personnel were only on one side of the organization. We've created a system in all three sections so that an officer can go from patrol into events into investigations or into professional standards so that when it comes time to fill voids in leadership, those employees will be ready to assume those positions.

Later this month or in February we will release our strategic plan for campus, which talks about our service delivery for the campus community, how to set standards and how to define successes. That is part of the next evolution for policing. In the city world, we measured success by response time, clearance rates or reduction in Part I crimes. I don't know that you can apply the same metrics to a campus police department, but that's where our work with Associate Vice Chancellor Jeffrey Luftig will be critical in defining what a flagship police department looks like.

We're also working with the student government tri-executives on a campus safety initiative, and over Thanksgiving break, we removed seven blue emergency phones that were on campus. We exist to make sure our students and faculty and staff are safe. We're looking at using lighting and a safety app instead of the phones, and we also have a camera initiative that will determine where we place the devices on campus so we have safe pathways for our students who traverse back and forth on the Hill. How the police department contributes to the success of our students is very critical for us. Are there things we could be doing to foster a sense of safety on the campus, can we look at education efforts rather than zero-tolerance on minor criminal violations? How do we partner with our various colleges in identifying impediments to a students successful matriculation? Those are all of the forward-thinking practices a flag-ship institution should be examining.

And we're partnering with our PanHellenic organizations to reduce sexual assaults. PanHellenic leaders came to me and asked how they could make a difference. What a great opportunity it was for me to listen to their ideas. I have the experience of 23 years in law enforcement but they are the ones who interact day-to-day with their peers and they can sell the message of communicating what "no" means, what role an active bystander can play, and how to drink responsibly.

2. You spent 20 years with the Los Angeles Police Department, overseeing everything from gang operations to policing at the Academy Awards. What would you consider some of the high points and low points of your time in LA?

One of my high points has to be my work with communities. When you first go into law enforcement, you have entry level interviews and you talk about service to the community and how you want to be a stakeholder there. Then when you become an officer, you start to understand that you carry a badge and gun and have a lot of power. You can be coaxed by the sexiness of driving fast and pulling your gun and arresting bad guys and you can forget that your community really relies upon you for their safety. The reality of policing is not the thrill of arresting the bad guy, because that's the adrenaline talking; it's the follow-through and the work that you do to make the community better. It's the partnerships that you build with the community so that the community can protect itself, and set its own standards of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

When I was working in south central (LA) in an economically depressed area, I saw young men and young women and juveniles who didn't have a chance at life because mom or dad wasn't in the picture. They would have to travel through multiple gang territories to get to school and that's when I knew I could help make a difference in their lives. That's the rewarding factor: It's the lives you save and the on-ramps to crime that you stop. Even here in Colorado I meet kids and I see some of those warning signs – parents not in the picture, lack of economic support and substance abuse. Those are the predictors that I know can lead kids down the wrong path. As a leader in law-enforcement, the challenge for me is, how do we as leaders destroy the on-ramp to crime that so many of our youth fall into.

So part of my work in south central was to build trust and make a difference in the community. That was very critical, especially when the LAPD was accused of excessive force, false arrest, and illegal search and seizure. The

department had to follow mandates to prove to the community that we didn't racially profile. But the act of satisfying those mandates isn't what mattered to the community. It's the day-to-day interactions with law enforcement that matter. For instance, when I would see the community at an event, or play basketball with the young men or women at a rec center, or go to muffins for mom or donuts for dads. Not only did they see a uniform, but they saw a human being behind a uniform. As law enforcement officers, you have to walk a fine line of staying safe and having a command presence and bearing but you also want the community to understand that we are human and that we have feelings and families. When two students were gunned down at the University of Southern California, we didn't know who had done it. There were people who intimated that a local gang had killed the two, but I had local gang members calling me, saying, "Capt. Zak, it wasn't us." Had I not had that trust and that relationship with that community, they would never have called me. In the end, the local gang had absolutely no connection to those homicides.

One of the low points came when I was working the gang unit. There was a young boy – Danny Boy – who was 7 or 8 at the time, and he would run up to my car and say, "Officer Town (my maiden name), do you have baseball cards today?" He lived in gang-infested territory and didn't have a chance. Sure enough, 10 years down the road he was murdered. You form relationships in your career, but you can't save everybody. But you always work hard to prevent the next one.

Other high points were the Academy Awards and seeing that go off successfully. The LA marathon was a great experience, being able to save the city money in terms of law enforcement deployment that was needed and to allow our youth – explorer cadets – to assist our officers. We gave these youth volunteers an opportunity to experience what it is like to be an officer and stand guard on the parade route and to work with the community. It was a great recruitment tool for law enforcement.

3. Was there a person or event that influenced your career decision?

My father was a military man, serving 26 years in the United States Air Force. He was a great influence in my life. I lost my mom at a young age and he taught his three daughters to be self-sufficient and to be career women. He basically taught us we could do anything a man could do and sometimes do it better. There used to be a saying around our house: "God bless the person who attracts a Town girl, because they will have their work cut out for them." We weren't cut from the traditional cloth. He used to tease me that he paid all that money for me to attend college and I ended up being a cop. But little did he know that later on in life, after he passed, I would become a chief. I think he would be very proud of the choices I made in my career.

4. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Hopefully, I will still be here at CU. My youngest (of five children) will be 18. If you would have asked me if I would have stayed in LA, could I have worked until I was 65, I would tell you that I don't think I could have survived. For me, it's about striking a nice equilibrium between my family, my personal life and work and still gain satisfaction. I believe in 10 years I'll still be here and the department will be fully staffed.

That's one of my goals – to be fully staffed. When I first came to CU, people told me that would never happen. We were losing officers to other agencies or different professions. I believe it takes a unique officer to work at CU because of the campus dynamics. I believe they are out there and hopefully, the days of a revolving door at CU are over. The work we are doing with human resources and the business partnership model will help the workforce stabilize so we won't have the turnover we had before I got here.

5. Do you have an item or artifact in your office that holds special meaning for you?

I attended the FBI's National Academy. They have four sessions a year and bring in about 270 law enforcement officers every session. It's very prestigious to be able to go to the NA, and while you are there, you earn what is called a brick -- a yellow brick. The 10-week program includes lots of physical activities. During the last week of the session, you run the Yellow Brick Road, which is 8 miles long and contains different obstacles that you have to go through. It's sort of similar to what the Marines do at Quantico. After you get back from the NA, everyone asks if you got your brick. It's almost a walk of shame if you don't get your yellow brick. Not only do I have my yellow brick, I also have a blue brick that I earned for a 34-mile swim that is done over the course of the session. So I have by yellow brick and my

blue brick in my office and they are something I'm very proud of.

[Construction, maintenance goals outlined for state legislators][3]

University of Colorado leaders on Tuesday made their case for construction, renovation and maintenance needs across the system during an annual presentation to the state's [Capital Development Committee][4].

President Bruce Benson, Regent Sue Sharkey and the four campus chancellors each spoke before the committee, which reviews funding requests for capital projects from all state agencies before making prioritized recommendations to the Legislature's Joint Budget Committee.

Benson noted that the university works to manage its assets carefully, and participates in many public-private partnerships to maximize efficiencies. He stressed, though, that there is no substitute for state funding for capital construction.

He thanked Gov. John Hickenlooper and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education for their support of two critical projects: continuation construction costs for the Jennie Smoly Caruthers Biotechnology Building in Boulder ($20.2 million) and the Visual and Performing Arts building in Colorado Springs ($9.6 million). Both are included in Hickenlooper's recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2016.

Benson also stressed CU's need for controlled maintenance, some funding for which is included in the governor's budget recommendation: The Level I priorities are $2.35 million for CU-Boulder (flood mitigation, fire sprinkler upgrades, HVAC renovation) and $216,886 for the CU Anschutz Medical Campus (utility vault improvements).

Should more state funding become available, CU hopes to secure support for CU Denver's North Classroom Building renovation ($20.6 million; see details below) and controlled maintenance projects at Levels II and III: about $2.7 million at CU-Boulder, $1.4 million at CU Anschutz and $670,342 at UCCS. The latter has no Level I projects on the list, while CU Denver is not eligible for such funding because the university bought the buildings less than 15 years ago.

Chancellors also presented plans for projects not currently included in the governor's budget:
Chancellor Philip DiStefano stressed a high priority for a CU-Boulder Aerospace Engineering Sciences Building, new construction at the East Campus that would rely on $28.3 million in state funding and $46.7 million cash. The 138,500-square-foot facility would be supported by public-private partnerships and would boost the university's critical ties with state and national aerospace science enterprises. Chancellor Pam Shockley-Zalabak outlined two UCCS projects: the $33.8 million South Hall, which would house the College of Education, some College of Letters, Arts and Sciences departments, classrooms, offices and an auditorium; and a phased renovation of the College of Engineering and Applied Science that would upgrade classrooms, offices and a clean room, as well as add research capabilities and improve energy efficiency. The latter project calls for $6.6 million in Fiscal Year 2017 and $21.1 million in FY18.
Chancellor Jerry Wartgow gave details on CU Denver's North Classroom Building renovation, a top-priority project requiring $31.9 million, including $20.6 million in state funding. The latter would address building improvements to the 27-year-old facility, while CU's cash-funded portion would go toward interior renovations of common areas and educational and support spaces. He also presented priorities for next year: an Engineering and Physical Sciences addition to the North Classroom ($20.7 million from the state) and a Pre-Health Instructional Lab Wing addition to the Auraria Science Building ($9.9 million from the state). Chancellor Don Elliman said the current top priority at CU Anschutz is Interdisciplinary Building 1 and Data Center, a new facility calling for $24.4 million in state funds and the same amount in cash. It would house the Center for Biomedical Informatics, which would expand the work of the university and partner hospitals in personalized medicine; clinical faculty offices and the Office of Information Technology's data center staff offices.
Members of the six-lawmaker committee expressed appreciation for CU leaders appearing at the presentation. Committee Chair Edward Vigil said he is impressed by the amount of economic development stimulated by CU in campus communities and across the state.

The CDC will hear similar presentations from all state institutions and departments over the next month. Committee members then will recommend priorities to the Legislature's Joint Budget Committee, which eventually must make decisions reflected in the Long Bill (the state budget). That work generally concludes in March.

CU's online education initiative continues forward progress[5]

The University of Colorado's effort to advance its coordinated online education initiative took another step forward at the Board of Regents retreat in Silverthorne last week, when the board gave the four campus chancellors the green light to further develop the initiative, with an eye on a fall launch.

In November, Chancellors Philip DiStefano (CU-Boulder), Donald Elliman (CU Anschutz), Pam Shockley-Zalabak (UCCS) and Jerry Wartgow (CU Denver) proposed to the board that they lead a university-wide, concerted effort based on a common vision for online education at CU, which will be designed to help our current students complete their degrees, increase access overall, simplify concurrent enrollment for students, and provide shared services that support online education.

"The whole point is taking advantage of the strengths of the campuses in a collaborative manner and bringing it all together in a seamless way," Elliman said.

Across the CU system, campuses now offer a total of 32 degree programs completely online (most at the master's level), five undergraduate completion programs and 55 certificate programs. The chancellors said 25 new online degrees are planned. Online program expansion will be funded through a percentage of online revenue but initially, the chancellors and president will provide seed funding.

After the regents gave the initial go-ahead in November, the chancellors established four committees to develop the model: academic, finance, technology and marketing. Members of each committee include representatives of each campus and the system. They worked on an aggressive timeline through December and early January to craft a blueprint for next steps.

"An awful lot of work has been done in a very short period of time," said CU President Bruce Benson.

DiStefano said a key to success is ensuring online students have the same quality instruction as regular students, which means courses will be taught by regular campus faculty affiliated with an academic department. The target markets include current students, adult students completing degrees, high school students taking concurrent classes, community college students, adults seeking a professional master's degree, and fully online students.

"I'm convinced that by creating courses with faculty from the campuses, we can do it faster, more efficiently and with faculty dedicated to making it work," Shockley-Zalabak said.

The regents agreed, although some had lingering questions about the model, timing and approach.

"I want to continue to explore if this is the best way to do this," said Regent Michael Carrigan. "I'm concerned the door is closing as far as CU being on the cutting edge."

Regent Steve Bosley said launching a new initiative of such magnitude is a work in progress at the outset, but worth the effort.

"We're going to be better off than we were," he said. "It will evolve and it will change."

When Board Chairman Kyle Hybl asked for a sense of the board, there was strong support for moving forward.

Work on the initiative will continue through spring and summer, with the goal of being in the market by fall. It's an

increasingly crowded and well-funded market, with competitors ranging from Arizona State University to CSU Global to the for-profit University of Phoenix. A market assessment completed by the marketing committee showed that reputation and price were the top two factors students consider when looking at online degree programs. One of the charges to the marketing committee is to develop a name for the initiative. The committee will forward suggestions in the coming weeks.

While much work remains, Wartgow said he is optimistic about prospects.

“We are now ready, and very excited, to move forward with this vital initiative,” he said.

Chancellor shares thoughts, approach on upcoming James Holmes trial[6]

Chancellor Don Elliman

University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus Chancellor Don Elliman on Wednesday shared with the campus community some of the challenges the campus will face related to the upcoming trial of Aurora theater shooting suspect James Holmes.

Jury selection for the trial, which is expected to start in the summer and last several months, begins next week.

Holmes was a graduate student at CU but withdrew from the university several weeks before the shootings. While the university is not a party to the trial, several dozen CU faculty, staff and students are expected to testify.

“Our highest duty is protect the integrity of the trial and not take any action that would adversely affect the pursuit of justice,” Elliman wrote. His complete communication is available here[8].

CU Cancer Center brings specialty care to Colorado[9]

From left: Charlie Crevling, Senior Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer; Peggy Carey; Alex Urquhart, M.D.; Patricia Hardenbergh, M.D., from Shaw Regional Cancer Center; Michael Glode, M.D.; and Mark Kochevar, MBA from CU Cancer Center.

Far left and far right: Tom Purcell, M.D., MBA, and Michael Glode, M.D., from CU Cancer Center Virginia; M. Tjan-Wettstein, M.D.; Mark R. Hancock, M.D.; Paula Marchionda, M.D., from St. Mary’s Regional Cancer Center.

The University of Colorado Cancer Center has cemented relationships with three hospitals bringing specialty oncology care and clinical trials sponsored by the National Cancer Institute to cancer survivors in Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, Vail-Edwards, and surrounding areas.

CU Cancer Center renewed agreements with St. Mary’s Regional Cancer Center in Grand Junction, Shaw Regional Cancer Center at Vail Valley Medical Center and Calaway-Young Cancer Center at Valley View Hospital in Glenwood Springs.
[12]

Signs point the way to CU For Colorado outreach locations

As part of CU President Bruce Benson's CU For Colorado[13] campaign, the CU Cancer Center and CU School of Medicine are presenting branded lobby signs to hospitals where the university has outreach partnerships to symbolize the pride the university has in serving health care needs in those Colorado communities.

"One of CU's untold stories is the immense amount of outreach our campuses provide to people and places in Colorado," said CU Regent Glen Gallegos, a Grand Junction resident elected to represent Colorado's 3rd Congressional District. "The physicians at the CU Cancer Center travel to provide services to patients in communities that do not have access to this level of critical care. The patients don't have to travel to Denver – CU comes to them, to serve them."

The CU School of Medicine – through University Physicians Inc., which oversees hundreds of outreach agreements – plans to present two of the branded lobby signs to Grand Junction next week; dozens more will be delivered to medical facilities across the state in the coming months.

Are you part of a CU outreach effort? To help spread the word, click here[14] to submit your program's information to the CU For Colorado website[15]. If you deliver an outreach program at a location where a CU sign could be displayed, please contact outreach@cu.edu[16].

The agreements bring access to state-of-the-art care to cancer patients in Colorado who may not be able to travel to the Denver area for specialized care. Cancer survivors throughout the region also will receive increased access to ongoing phase I trials at CU Cancer Center that are testing the latest drugs in the earliest tests in humans.

"One of the goals of CU Cancer Center is to bring the latest in cancer care and clinical trials to people in remote areas of Colorado," said Dan Theodorescu, M.D., Ph.D. "We need hospital partners across the state to make this happen. Without the help of our outreach sites, we would not be able to share our expertise on this scale."

CU Cancer Center is the only comprehensive cancer center as designated by the National Cancer Institute in the Rocky Mountain region. There are currently 78 clinical trials underway at CU Cancer Center outreach sites.

"We have scientists, right here in Colorado, leading the way in research in multiple cancer types," Theodorescu said. "In the clinic, we craft health care guidelines used as the gold standard by oncologists everywhere to establish treatment plans for cancer survivors. The world watches what happens at CU Cancer Center."

In addition to cancer care and clinical trials, affiliate physicians take part in multi-disciplinary video tumor boards to discuss interesting and unusual cases. This allows physicians from all sites to collaborate with one another and with specialists from CU Cancer Center. The intent of the tumor boards is to enhance collaboration and education.

Physicians from the outreach sites also visit the CU Cancer Center at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus on an ongoing basis to strengthen communication, relationships and collaboration. In addition, physicians from CU Cancer Center visit the outreach sites on a regular basis to collaborate with community physicians on care and training.

"Through our interactions with the colleagues at our affiliates, we not only gain knowledge of the challenges and research opportunities they have," said Michael Glode, M.D., associate director of community engagement for CU Cancer Center. "In many cases we also have discovered new ways to approach education and research that we can apply here at the Anschutz Medical Campus."

Financial wellness could be habit-forming[17]

[18]

Anyone seeking a worthy New Year's resolution needs look no further than the Healthy Financial Habits website[18], where users can tackle everything from creating a well-organized financial filing system to taking stock of present and future financial needs—all with helpful, downloadable worksheets.

The newest online resource from CU Employee Services[19], Healthy Financial Habits endeavors to help busy people cultivate behaviors that contribute to financial well-being.

It can be daunting to commit to setting financial goals and confronting your finances—good and bad. That's why Healthy Financial Habits urges individuals to start small by focusing on one or two of the site's 10 habits.

"If you're motivated to do all 10 at once – more power to you!" says Katie Sauer, director of financial wellness, education and research in Employee Services. "But if you're like me, then you'll fare far better by working on one new habit each month."

The site's recommended first step, tracking your spending and financial standing, urges users to take crucial but often dreaded tasks: raising personal awareness of financial reserves by creating a tracking sheet, a budget and a regular reminder to request credit reports.

From there, Healthy Financial Habits sets users on course to establish good practices for a lifetime of financial well-being. Some items are relatively simple: Using strong passwords and changing them regularly. Shred personal financial documents, when appropriate. Start reading and talking to unbiased, reliable sources of financial information. And though you don't need to become Suze Orman, you should stay abreast of what's happening in financial markets.

Healthy Financial Habits also asks users to challenge themselves by setting and maintaining goals, establishing or updating emergency financial plans, and sitting down for an annual personal financial checkup. Its final task (perhaps most difficult of all): Practice some daily restraint by pausing before making any financial decisions – especially the seemingly small ones.

"The last habit — sleep on It — is the single best piece of financial advice I've ever been given," Sauer says. "It is critical to our long-term financial well-being to be in conscious control of our financial decisions and to not make them when we are either caught up in emotions or are just cruising on autopilot."

UCCS graduate online programs ranked among nation's best, top in Colorado[20]

UCCS online graduate programs in business, engineering and nursing are among the top 50 programs in the country and the best in Colorado, according to the editors of U.S. News and World Report magazine.

In the magazine's Best Online Graduate Education Rankings released Jan. 7, UCCS programs were considered among the nation's best based on criteria such as student engagement, faculty credentials and training, student services, peer reputation and admission selectivity. U.S. News and World Report leads in the collection of accurate data and its use to rank colleges and universities as a consumer guide.

“While rankings such as these are not a singular indicator of quality, they are an important tool for students when selecting from the myriad of programs offered,” said Pam Shockley-Zalabak, chancellor. “The University of Colorado Colorado Springs continues to offer an affordable high-quality education in formats that meet student needs and the expectations of southern Colorado.”

Specific UCCS programs ranked by U.S. News are:
Business. Among the 142 public and private university online graduate MBA programs ranked by U.S. News, the UCCS program was 40, the highest of any program offered by a university in Colorado. **Engineering**. Of the 56 public and private university online graduate engineering programs ranked by U.S. News, the UCCS program was 20, the highest of any program offered by a university in Colorado. **Nursing.** Of the 96 public and private university online graduate nursing programs ranked by U.S. News, the UCCS program was 48. Among Colorado university programs, only the program at the University of Colorado Denver (5) ranked higher.
For a complete list of program rankings and methodologies, please see www.usnews.com/online[21].

Two online graduate programs highly ranked by U.S. News[22]

Two University of Colorado Denver ? Anschutz Medical Campus online graduate programs were ranked in the top 10 of online programs nationally, in a report released by U.S. News & World Report.

The CU College of Nursing[23] at the Anschutz Medical Campus was ranked fifth in the report’s Best Online Graduate Nursing Programs category and the CU Denver School of Public Affair’s Online Master of Criminal Justice Program[24] was ranked ninth in the online Criminal Justice Programs category. The CU Denver | Anschutz programs were the only two graduate programs in Colorado to make the top 10 list.

Programs were ranked using key factors including student engagement, faculty credentials and training, student services and technology, peer reputation and admissions selectivity.

CU College of Nursing Online Graduate Programs Raises in Rank to No. 5

U.S. News & World Report’s ranking covers master’s and doctor of nursing practice programs that are offered entirely online. The two ranked CU College of Nursing programs are a master’s in Health Care Informatics and the i-LEAD (Innovation in Leadership and Administration in Nursing and Health Care Systems) master’s program. These programs are led by Amy Barton[25], Ph.D., RN, FAAN, the Daniel and Janet Mordecai Endowed Chair in Rural Health Nursing and Associate Dean for Clinical and Community Affairs, and Diane Skiba[26], Ph.D., FAAN, FACMI, Project Director, I-Collaboratory: Partnerships for Learning.

Both of the Informatics and i-LEAD master’s programs require an undergraduate nursing degree from a Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) or Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) accredited school or university and a copy of current and unencumbered nursing license, among other requirements.

“We’re proud of our long history in distance education,” says Dean Sarah A. Thompson, Ph.D., RN, FAAN. “Dr. Skiba pioneered distance formats for nursing education in the 1980s. And, Dr. Barton has used online formats in to fill education gaps in rural areas of Colorado. Our graduate programs are distance accessible and fill a statewide as well as national need.”

U.S. News & World Report most recently ranked graduate schools in 2013; the University of Colorado College of Nursing ranked 15th[27] for overall master’s program by U.S. News & World Report. The Pediatric Nurse Practitioner specialty ranked fifth, Nursing-Midwifery ranked 13th, and the Nurse Practitioner for Family Nursing specialty ranked

16th in the nation.

Online Criminal Justice Program makes top 10 in inaugural program ranking

In the first-ever ranking of online criminal justice programs, the CU Denver MCJ program placed ninth nationally and fifth among public institutions.

Graduates of the MCJ online program pursue careers in crime analysis, social work, victim advocacy, policing at the local, state and federal level, public policy and more. Students in the MCJ online program come from a wide range of backgrounds and professional experiences.

“We are thrilled by this powerful endorsement of our online program,” says Callie Rennison[28], associate professor and MCJ program director. “Students in the program benefit from faculty who are not only highly respected researchers, but who also have worked in the criminal justice field. Our graduates are very well prepared for contemporary criminal justice jobs in crime analysis, victim advocacy, nonprofit organizations and law enforcement.”

The School of Public Affairs at CU Denver[29] also offers an undergraduate criminal justice degree and a dual Bachelor/Master of Criminal Justice program.

Enterotrack commercializing device for non-invasive inflammation monitoring[30]

EnteroTrack LLC and the University of Colorado (CU) have executed an exclusive license agreement that will allow the company to develop and market a novel device to monitor inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract.

Diagnosing inflammatory conditions of the gastrointestinal tract such as eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE), severe gastroesophageal reflux (GERD), eosinophilic gastroenteritis (EGE), food allergic enteropathy (FAE), and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is often difficult, since blood tests and radio-imaging aren't able to pinpoint the cause of inflammation. Ultimately, many patients must undergo endoscopy - use of an instrument to visualize the esophagus and collect samples for testing.

EnteroTrack LLC is developing a capsule that allows for simple, low-cost analysis of esophageal content. The capsule can help identify the presence of esophageal inflammation, leading to faster treatment. The capsule can also be used to monitor the effectiveness of treatment, and in the future may also be used to help diagnose esophageal diseases.

The company was formed as a result of a partnership between Glenn T. Furuta, M.D., a professor of pediatrics at the CU School of Medicine at the Anschutz Medical Campus and a pediatric gastroenterologist at Children's Hospital Colorado; Robin Shandas, Ph.D., professor and chair of bioengineering at the University of Colorado Denver, College of Engineering and Applied Science; and Steven Ackerman, Ph.D., a professor of biochemistry at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Chicago.

"This partnership represents the best aspect of academic medicine," Furuta said. "We have been able to successfully collaborate in a multi-disciplinary fashion to develop and execute a plan that will ultimately improve the lives children and adults with gastrointestinal diseases."

Furuta developed the technology in collaboration with Ackerman; the duo then approached Shandas to move the idea from the university research lab into a commercial entity.

At that time, Children's Hospital Colorado stepped in to provide seed funding to the company, supporting the innovative research of the researchers and recognizing the opportunity to positively impact the lives of children with inflammatory conditions of the gastrointestinal track.

"Given the increasing pressures to contain costs, there is clear rationale for innovative, cost-effective methods to

monitor esophageal diseases," said Shandas, who is acting as the company's interim CEO. "This technology holds particular promise because it can reduce total patient care costs while keeping good margins. We hope to obtain FDA approval for the device in 2015."

Study finds experience of pain relies on multiple brain pathways, not just one[31]

People's mindsets can affect their experience of pain. For example, a soldier in battle or an athlete in competition may report that an injury did not feel especially painful in the heat of the moment. But until now it has been unclear how this phenomenon works in the brain.

A new study led by the University of Colorado Boulder finds that when we use our thoughts to dull or enhance our experience of pain, the physical pain signal in the brain — sent by nerves in the area of a wound, for example, and encoded in multiple regions in the cerebrum — does not actually change. Instead the act of using thoughts to modulate pain, a technique called "cognitive self-regulation" that is commonly used to manage chronic pain, works via a separate pathway in the brain.

The findings, published in the journal PLOS Biology this month, show that the processing of pain in our brains goes beyond the mere physical pain signal and underscore a growing understanding among neuroscientists that there is not a single pain system in the brain, as was once believed.

"We found that there are two different pathways in our brains that contribute to the pain experience," said Choong-Wan Woo, lead author of the study and a doctoral student in CU-Boulder's Department of Psychology and Neuroscience.

The first pathway mediates the effects of turning up the intensity of painful stimulation and includes a number of "classic" regions in the brain, such as the anterior cingulate cortex. The second pathway, discovered in the new study, mediates the effects of cognitive regulation, and involves increasing activity in the medial prefrontal cortex and nucleus accumbens—brain regions that are involved in emotion and motivation but do not typically respond to painful events in the body.

This latter pathway may hold some of the keys to understanding the "emotional" aspects of pain, which can contribute substantially to long-term pain and disability.

Other CU-Boulder co-authors of the study are psychology and neuroscience Associate Professor Tor Wager and postdoctoral researcher Mathieu Roy. Jason Buhle, an adjunct assistant professor at Columbia University, is also a study co-author.

For the study, participants were given painful heat stimuli on their arms while their brains were scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI.

For the first scan, the participants were asked to experience the painful heat without thinking of anything in particular. In subsequent scans, the participants were asked to imagine that the sizzling hot heat was actually damaging their skin, a thought that increased their experience of the pain, and then to imagine that the heat was actually a welcome sensation on an extremely cold day, a thought that decreased their experience of the pain.

The scans of the brain were then compared. The signal for physical pain remained the same across all three scenarios, regardless of how the participants rated their pain experience. But a signal in the brain using a second pathway changed in intensity depending on the type of thoughts, or "cognitive self-regulation" used.

The researchers were able to disentangle the two pathways based on recent work done in Wager's Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Lab. In 2013, Wager and his colleagues published a study in the New England Journal of Medicine that identified for the first time a distinct brain signature for physical pain.

“Previously people did not have this specific brain marker for pain,” Woo said. “Incorporating that measure, and identifying a separate pathway that makes an independent contribution to pain, is a major innovation of this paper.”

Risk Management and Insurance Program fills urgent workforce need[32]

Pictured from left are, front row, Nicholas Lind, Lori Genuchi (RMI Program manager), and Angela Carey; back row, Ajeyo Banerjee (RMI Program director), Randal Maestas and Jonathan Doke.

Angela Carey has a problem that is the envy of most university students: She already works in her field. In fact, by working full time, she has made the decision to spread her last three classes over two semesters.

Carey expects to graduate in December 2015, when she'll ramp up even further into one of the hottest fields in the United States. Carey's solid prospects represent the bright futures awaiting students in the Risk Management and Insurance Program[34] at the CU Denver Business School[35]. It's not uncommon for RMI students to get hired several months before graduation.

"I'm so glad I made Risk Management and Insurance my major," said Carey, who started with Chubb & Son, a large multinational insurance carrier, 18 months ago in the company's training program. "With the two combined—Risk Management and Insurance—there are endless possibilities. Plus, what we're learning can apply to positions in many other industries besides insurance."

When the CU Denver Business School RMI Program launched a few years ago, Director Ajeyo Banerjee[36], Ph.D., CMA, said, many students were puzzled by the unfamiliar acronym. But they quickly learned and became intrigued, especially by the many career doors opened by the program. "These students are being hired early because the firms are worried they might be picked up by another company," Banerjee said.

The story is in the numbers:
The CU Denver Business School RMI program has a 100 percent job-placement record for graduates. Now in its fourth year, the RMI Program has seen 28 percent overall enrollment growth, from 19 students to 88. One-of-a-kind program. The CU Denver Business School offers the only RMI program between California and the Midwest. 60 percent of the current RMI workforce in the United States will reach retirement age within five to 10 years.
"We're the only program like this in this part of the country," said Lori Genuchi[36], RMI Program manager, "so our students are a hot commodity."

It's a big industry, said Banerjee, adding that no business can do without insurance. "All of our graduates are doing very well," he said. "That provides further incentive to our current students because it creates a visible pathway to a job with good salaries and benefits."

Other firms that have hired current CU Denver Business School students include Lockton (two students on the payroll), CNA and Arthur J. Gallagher. "It indicates the marketability of our students," Banerjee said. "And the fact that the program is providing a value that is easily recognizable by these potential employers."

Tim Moehlenpah, Denver branch vice president for CNA, said he's noticed a strong work ethic in RMI Program students. "We've been quite impressed by that right off the bat," he said. "We also like that they have been exposed to various areas within the industry. And we like that the students are passionate about the insurance industry as a whole. Those three things really set them apart."

The Business School's "holistic approach" to RMI gives students ample opportunities to meet face to face with industry leaders before they graduate. All students participate in at least one **Shadow Day,** where they spend a day shadowing an RMI professional, including a 30-minute meeting with a senior executive. The days provide real-world insights for

the students, while giving firms an opportunity to view prospective employees.

Recent graduates hired by insurance carrier CNA typically start out in claim origination, said Moehlenpah, who earned an MBA from the CU Denver Business School in 2006. "Seventy-five percent of our claims professionals will be of retirement age in next five years," he said. "The industry is going through a cataclysmic change. In the next five years the amount of opportunity for young people who want to pursue an insurance career is going to be phenomenal."

Read more about the program and some of its "future-is-now" students by clicking here[37].

Bianco receives grant for 'Pathway2Teaching'[38]

[39]

Margarita Bianco, associate professor of Special Education in the School of Education and Human Development at CU Denver, has won a 2014-2015 Diversity and Excellence Grant for her proposal "A Pathway2Teaching for Native American Youth." The initiative intends to increase the number of American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) in the education profession.

According to the proposal for the grant, there are only five Native Americans who are undergraduate education majors at the school. In Denver Public Schools, less than 50 percent of AI/AN students graduate from high school. The proposal said the students "desperately need more teachers who recognize their unique histories and cultural learning needs. American Indians are underrepresented in the teaching profession and in general at the University of Colorado (less than 1 percent)."

The proposal will target schools with larger numbers of tribal students and provide successful role models and mentors to assist those who would like to pursue a degree in education.

Friedson awarded prize for tax journal publication[40]

Andrew Friedson, assistant professor of economics in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at CU Denver, was awarded the prestigious Richard Musgrave Prize by the National Tax Association at their annual meeting in November. The Musgrave prize is awarded to the most outstanding paper published in the National Tax Journal each year. Friedson's winning paper, "Ranking Up by Moving Out: The Effect of the Texas Top 10% Plan on Property Values," is a joint work with Kalena Cortes at Texas A&M.

The paper shows how students reacted strategically to a school incentive program that offers automatic admission to University of Texas schools to students in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class. Friedson and his co-author found that students were moving to districts with historically poor test scores to take advantage of lower-performing peers. This movement created noticeable distortions to property values in these low-performing districts, which had important property tax and school finance implications.

Six CU-Boulder scholars ranked among most influential in education[41]

Six members of the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education faculty were recognized in the “Edu-Scholar Public Influence Rankings” for being among the nation’s top 200 researchers whose scholarship bridges academic and public audiences.

Shepard

School of Education Dean **Lorrie Shepard** (No. 82) was joined on the list by faculty members **Derek Briggs** (No. 178), **Gene Glass** (No. 10), **Kris Gutiérrez** (No. 133), **Alex Molnar** (No 121) and **Kevin Welner** (No. 89).

The list was initiated by Rick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute and is published on Hess’ blog in Education Week. He began the project five years ago to “spur conversation about which university-based academics are contributing most substantially to public debates over education and ed policy, and how they do so.”

Hess and his colleagues scored each scholar on the list in eight categories, including number of books published and Amazon ranking; number of mentions in the press, blogs and the Congressional Record; Twitter Klout score; and Google Scholar score, which attempts to calculate citations of the scholar’s work.

“By bringing together measures of scholarly impact and broader impact on public dialogue, Hess has helped to advance a very important discussion,” said Shepard. “While we must recognize that the particular criteria used in these rankings are quite limited in capturing scholars’ influence, I am pleased to see our small School of Education featured so prominently as contributing to public discussion.”

Shepard hopes that education scholars will follow Hess’ lead and work together to create what are known as “altmetric” approaches to account for public scholarship. “As a community of scholars dedicated to this work, we must develop robust measures to capture authentic public engagement.”

Welner, who also is director of the National Education Policy Center housed at CU-Boulder, agrees.

“Developing policy-relevant ideas grounded in the best research, and then effectively communicating those ideas to the public, is itself an important scholarly endeavor,” he said. “A century ago, John Dewey convincingly argued that scholars must play a central role in advancing democratic problem solving. Public scholarship is integral to rigorous academic work and is a core responsibility of education researchers.”

Welner served as part of the 31-member selection committee for the 2015 rankings. He has been recognized by the list annually since its inception.

Delong receives early investigator award[43]

Thomas Delong, School of Medicine, recently received a Pathway Accelerator – Early Investigator Award for his translational research project titled, "The Role of Hybrid Insulin Peptides in the Development of Type 1 Diabetes."

With nearly 30 million adults and children in the U.S. living with diabetes, and another 86 million living with prediabetes, diabetes is a physical and financial burden for the health of the nation. To accelerate the research needed to discover solutions to this deadly epidemic, the American Diabetes Association's initiative, Pathway to Stop Diabetes, will fund 100 new diabetes researchers over the next decade.

With more than $35 million in gifts from individuals, foundation and corporations, including program sponsors Sanofi, Novo Nordisk, AstraZeneca and the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation, the prestigious Pathway award nominees are selected through internal competition at U.S. academic and nonprofit research institutions that identify and nominate their most creative and talented scientists. These scientists, who are just starting their careers in diabetes research, or

who are already established in another field but want to expand their focus to diabetes research, propose innovative ideas for diabetes research projects. From 116 nominations this year, the American Diabetes Association awarded six Pathway grants.

Selected Pathway award recipients will receive $1.625 million in support for five to seven years to fund research relevant to any diabetes type, diabetes-related disease state or diabetes complication. Nominations included investigators from a broad range of disciplines, including medicine, biology, chemistry, engineering, physics and mathematics.

Dropping names ...[44]

Five people accepted non-teaching positions at UCCS in December. They are: **Leyna Bencomo**, assistive technology specialist, Information Technology; **Caleb Duckworth**, food service worker, Dining and Food Services; **Matthew Getze**, educational technologist, School of Public Affairs; **Joshua Nicholson**, website designer, Information Technology; and **Shaun Stearns**, professional research assistant, Trauma, Health and Hazards Center.

Archaeologist to share discoveries at CU-Boulder[45]

13th -century moccasin from the Promontory Caves.

Apachean languages, including Navajo, are today among the most widespread native languages in the United States, but the origin of Apachean-speaking communities has been shrouded in mystery — until now.

Jack Ives, executive director of the Institute of Prairie Archaeology and Landrex Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of Alberta, will give a public lecture on research that is revolutionizing the study of Apachean origins. The free talk will be at 7 p.m. Jan. 24 in the Hale Sciences Building Room 270 at CU-Boulder.

His lecture, titled “The Ninth Clan—Exploring Apachean Origins in the Promontory Caves, Utah,” will discuss remarkably preserved remains from the Promontory caves and their continental-scale implications.

Ives is the Department of Anthropology Distinguished Lecturer in Archaeology for 2014-2015. His visit and lecture are made possible through the generous support of Western Cultural Resource Management. For more information, visit http://anthropology.colorado.edu/[46].

Links

[1] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/five-questions-melissa-zak[2] https://connections.cu.edu/news/five-questions-for-melissa-zak/5q-zak[3] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/construction-maintenance-goals-outlined-state-legislators[4] http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CGA-LegislativeCouncil/CLC/1251569907801[5] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu%E2%80%99s-online-education-initiative-continues-forward-progress[6] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/chancellor-shares-thoughts-approach-upcoming-james-holmes-trial[7] https://connections.cu.edu/news/chancellor-don-elliman-loses-interim-from-title/elliman-2[8] http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/WhoWeAre/Chancellor/CUAnschutz/ChancellorsCommunications/Pages/Upcoming-Aurora-theater-shooting-trial-1-14-15.aspx[9] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-cancer-center-brings-specialty-care-colorado[10] https://connections.cu.edu/file/cancer-ctrtoppng[11] https://connections.cu.edu/file/cancer-ctr01png[12] http://www.cu.edu/forcolorado[13] https://www.cusys.edu/forcolorado/[14] https://www.cusys.edu/forcolorado/submit.html[15] https://www.cusys.edu/forcolorado/index.html[16] mailto:outreach@cu.edu[17] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/financial-wellness-could-be-habit-forming[18] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/healthy-habits[19] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services[20] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/uccs-graduate-online-programs-ranked-among-nation%E2%80%99s-best-top-colorado[21] http://www.usnews.com/online[22] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/two-online-graduate-programs-highly-ranked-us-news[23] http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/nursing/Pages/default.aspx[24] http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/CUOnline/OnlineDegrees/CriminalJustice/Pages/CriminalJustice.aspx[25] http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/nursing/faculty-staff/faculty/Pages/a_barton.aspx[26] http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/nursing/faculty-staff/faculty/Pages/d_skiba.aspx[27] http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/departments/InstitutionalResearch/InstitutionalCharacteristics/Pages/RankingAccomplishments.aspx[28] http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/SPA/FacultyStaff/Faculty/Pages/CallieRennison.aspx[29] http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/SPA/Academics/programs/Pages/index.aspx[30] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/enterotrack-commercializing-device-non-invasive-inflammation-monitoring[31] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/study-finds-experience-pain-relies-multiple-brain-pathways-not-just-one[32] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/risk-management-and-insurance-program-fills-urgent-workforce-need[33] https://connections.cu.edu/file/ucdrisk-mgmttoppng[34] http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/business/industry-programs/RMI/Pages/RiskManagement.aspx[35] http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/business/Pages/business-school.aspx[36] http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/business/industry-programs/RMI/Pages/faculty_staff.aspx[37]

[38] https://connections.cu.edu/people/bianco-receives-grant-%E2%80%98pathway2teaching%E2%80%99[39] https://connections.cu.edu/file/pbiancopng[40] https://connections.cu.edu/people/friedson-awarded-prize-tax-journal-publication[41] https://connections.cu.edu/people/six-cu-boulder-scholars-ranked-among-most-influential-education[42] https://connections.cu.edu/file/pshepardpng[43] https://connections.cu.edu/people/delong-receives-early-investigator-award[44] https://connections.cu.edu/people/dropping-names-104[45] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/archaeologist-share-discoveries-cu-boulder-0[46] http://anthropology.colorado.edu/