A student entrepreneur's journey to professional leadership[1]
[2]
Lee Haider's trajectory from student entrepreneur to a leader at a major corporation showcases the transformative power of the entrepreneurial ecosystem at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. His environment at UCCS included the Garage, the university's vibrant hub for entrepreneurial endeavors. The Garage isn't just a space, but a dynamic environment where Lee and his peers immersed themselves in the entrepreneurial culture of Colorado Springs.
Lee Haider's trajectory from student entrepreneur to a leader at a major corporation showcases the transformative power of the entrepreneurial ecosystem at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs.

Haider[3], who graduated from UCCS in 2020 with a bachelor of innovation degree[4] in marketing, now is a professional at Xero, a multibillion-dollar accounting software company. Haider's journey highlights not only his success but also the broader impact of a university that empowers its students to excel as entrepreneurs and leaders in their chosen fields.

"People often say you are as good as your environment. I disagree with that," Haider said. "I believe you are as good as what you do within your environment."

Haider's environment at UCCS included the Garage[5], the university's vibrant hub for entrepreneurial endeavors. The Garage isn't just a space, but a dynamic environment where Lee and his peers immersed themselves in the entrepreneurial culture of Colorado Springs.

In the incubator program, UCCS students learn to develop and execute business venture ideas. One of the Garage's standout features is its weekly pitch sessions, where students present their startup ideas in front of a supportive audience and receive valuable feedback. For Haider, these sessions were instrumental in breaking down the fear of failure and building confidence in articulating innovative ideas.

Through regular pitching and feedback, Haider honed his presentation skills, learned to adapt his ideas based on constructive criticism, and ultimately became a more confident and effective communicator.

The program's emphasis on practical, hands-on learning fosters a sense of community where students feel empowered to share and refine their ideas, knowing they have the support and guidance needed to turn their visions into reality.

The Garage also provided a rich networking environment, not just among students but also with experienced faculty members who offer real-world insights and mentorship. Interacting with these mentors enriched Haider's learning experience and expanded his entrepreneurial acumen beyond the classroom.

Describing his mentorship experience, Haider recalls the guidance of professors including Tom Duening, Ph.D., director, Center for Entrepreneurship, and Terrance Boult, Ph.D., El Pomar Endowed Professor of Innovation and Security.

Boult praises Haider for the exceptional adaptability he showed while in the Garage.

"Lee did a great job with the Garage and learned important lessons about meeting with and listening to customers," Boult said. "I see Lee's adaptability as a great example of what we hope students to learn in the bachelor of innovation and the Garage."

Haider calls the Garage cohort "the secret sauce," underscoring the importance of being surrounded by individuals who are striving for excellence. The collaborative atmosphere fostered within the Garage fueled creativity and problem-solving, propelling Haider and his peers forward in their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Haider's entrepreneurial spirit extended beyond the campus, as he actively participated in startup competitions and statewide Angel investment competitions. These experiences not only provided exposure for his startup, but also served as valuable learning opportunities, refining his business acumen and resilience in the face of challenges.

At the Garage, Haider found a supportive environment where he could experiment, fail and learn quickly, all without the repercussions he might encounter in the outside world — a realization that proved invaluable to him.

Equipped with the mindset and skills nurtured at UCCS, Haider now leads the social media strategy for the entire U.S. market at Xero.

When asked for advice he has for current and future students, Haider emphasized the importance of seizing every opportunity and embracing discomfort as a catalyst for growth, echoing his journey.

“Success favors momentum, and it's our responsibility to seize it,” Haider said. “Much of my success stems from my alma mater, UCCS, which not only provided me with resources and support, but also fostered a culture of innovation, resilience and collaboration.”

CU achieves $428 million in operating efficiencies over six-year period[6]

Delivering on the University of Colorado’s commitment to carrying out its educational and research mission efficiently, the CU system achieved $428 million in operating efficiencies from the 2017-18 fiscal year through the 2022-23 fiscal year.

The figure was reported as part of CU’s annual report on its ongoing efforts to increase efficiency and deliver greater value. These actions across the system result in savings for students, departments, campuses and employees. Chad Marturano, vice president and chief financial officer for the CU system, presented details[7] to the Board of Regents Finance Committee during its meeting Tuesday, held virtually.

The $428 million figure totals cost savings to CU’s four campuses and system administration, cost savings to departments and units, costs avoided, cost savings to students, reallocation of resources and other measures.

Efficiencies are achieved through a wide range of efforts, including the pursuit of low-cost sources of books and educational materials like open educational resources (OER), with savings passed on to students.

Reduced energy costs in buildings – achieved with installment of LED lights and better boilers, roofs, insulation and other equipment – further the gains in efficiency.

Personnel savings are realized by restructuring, reorganizing administrative areas, and implementing new systems. Increased reliance on digital processes and less use of paper and printing achieve additional cost savings.

Of the $428 million total, $96.4 million in efficiencies were achieved during the most recent fiscal year completed, 2022-23. Some 323 actions were taken to reach that total, which then is applied to reducing ongoing operation costs, or redirected to other areas of need, or saved for investment.

At CU campuses last year, the CU Anschutz Medical Campus achieved $7.7 million in efficiencies; CU Boulder, $4.3 million; UCCS, $3.9 million; and CU Denver, $1.1 million. Most of the cost savings, $79.5 million, were realized at the system administration level, where service centers achieve efficiencies systemwide. Risk Management oversees the university’s self-insurance program ($18 million in estimated annual savings), and CU’s Treasury refinanced bonds and achieved other debt savings ($30.4 million estimated annual savings).

Easier access to biosimilar medications improves affordability for CU health plan members[8]

The CU Health Plan team remains committed to equipping plan members and their families with the information needed to make informed choices regarding their health care.

Effective April 1, Humira will be removed from the Anthem Exclusive, Extended, High-Deductible, and Medicare plan formularies, and Humira biosimilar (adalimumab-adaz ; brand name Hyrimoz) will be covered for members of these CU health plans. This biosimilar offers the same clinical effectiveness as the brand-name product, Humira, and offers savings potential for CU health plans, with a list price more than 80% lower than the current list price of Humira.

Just as generic medications transformed the pharmaceutical landscape, biosimilars have the power to do the same for biologic medications. Together with CVS Caremark, the CU Health Plan is eager to promote access to more affordable medications that offer the same clinical effectiveness for CU health plan members through the availability of biosimilar medications. Members of Anthem-administered CU health plans (Exclusive, Extended, High-Deductible, and Medicare) whose pharmacy benefits are provided through CVS Caremark are encouraged to learn more about the advantages of biosimilar medications when biosimilar alternatives to a member's medication(s) are available.

The CU Health Plan spoke with Gina Moore, PharmD, MBA, associate dean and associate professor at the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus, to learn more about biosimilars and the benefits they pose to CU health plan members.

What are biosimilars? Biosimilars are safe and effective biologic medications for treating many illnesses such as chronic skin and bowel diseases, arthritis, kidney conditions, macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, and some cancers (such as breast, lung and colon).

"Biosimilars are FDA-approved alternative medications that are compared to another medication – the original biologic, also known as the reference product," Moore said. "Since biosimilars are made with the same types of natural sources as the reference product they are compared to, they provide the same treatment benefits with no clinically meaningful difference from the reference product."

This means you can expect the same safety and effectiveness from the biosimilar over the course of treatment as you would the reference product.

A biosimilar is very similar, but not identical, to an original biologic medication.

For biosimilars to be approved by the FDA, studies must show that there are no differences in the safety and effectiveness of biosimilars and the original biologics.

Both a biosimilar and its original biologic:
Are made from the same types of sources (e.g., living sources). Provide the same benefits when treating diseases or medical conditions. Are given at the same strength and dosage. Are not expected to cause new or worsening side effects.

Are biosimilars like generic medications?

Biosimilars are like generics in some ways, in that both types of medications are compared to a reference (original) product for approval, and both biosimilar and generics go through a rigorous review process. Once FDA-approved, these medications are just as safe and effective as the reference products they are compared to.

Like generic drugs, biosimilars can help lower drug costs for CU health plan members. Someone might switch to a biosimilar because of a change in insurance coverage or to save money. The lower cost is not a reflection of effectiveness or safety of biosimilars. Because of the lower cost, biosimilars may be covered by more insurance companies and offer patients additional treatment options.

So, how are biosimilars different from generics?

"Biosimilars differ from generics in a few key ways," Moore said. "At the most basic level, generics are identical to their reference drugs, whereas biosimilars are considered substantially similar to theirs. This is because generics are

made from chemical ingredients, while biosimilars are generally made from natural and living ingredients."

In contrast to a chemical, which is synthesized and is generally copied, a biologic medication is made from natural and living sources and cannot be exactly copied. So the information needed to demonstrate that a biologic is biosimilar to another biologic is much more extensive than what is needed for a generic.

"Because most biologics are made from living sources, it is normal for both biosimilars and original biologics to have minor differences between batches of the same medication," Moore said.

The ingredients used in biologics cannot be copied exactly, which is why biosimilars are not identical to the original biologic in the same way generic drugs are an exact chemical copy as their brand-name alternative. The FDA carefully reviews the differences between the original biologic and the biosimilar to ensure that biosimilars are as safe and effective as the original biologics.

What is an example of a medication and a biosimilar alternative? Humira is a common prescription medicine used to treat moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis (RA) in adults.

Effective April 1, Humira will no longer be covered for members of the Exclusive, Extended, and High Deductible CU Health Plans. Adalimumab-adaz (Hyrimoz) is a biosimilar of Humira and is covered under these health plans if you and your prescriber decide continuing adalimumab therapy is right for you. Switching to adalimumab-adaz (Hyrimoz) offers savings potential for the CU health plans because the list price of this medication is substantially lower than the current list price of Humira.

For clinical questions, CU health plan members taking Humira should speak directly with their provider or pharmacist about biosimilar options. For questions regarding coverage, members can reach out to the dedicated CVS Caremark member services line at 1-888-964-0121, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The CU Health Plan[9] **team continues to find innovative ways to help plans lower total costs while maintaining clinically appropriate coverage for all plan members.** As costs fluctuate with the dynamic health care landscape, CU Health Plan members may find switching to biosimilar alternatives of their medications an easy and effective way to help mitigate their family's health care spending. Members are encouraged to talk with their providers about biosimilar treatment options and any clinical questions they may have about making the switch. For questions regarding insurance coverage, contact the CVS Caremark dedicated member services line at 1-888-964-0121.

Regents University Affairs Committee advances proposals for three new degrees[10]

Plans for three new degrees and received approval from the Regents University Affairs Committee[11] during its March 19 meeting, held via Zoom.

The proposals are scheduled to be included on the consent agenda at the next meeting of the full Board of Regents, set for April 11-12 at CU Denver.

A proposed master's degree in financial technology, or FinTec, at the CU Denver Business School would be the first FinTec program in Colorado, said Dean Scott Dawson. It will be possible for students to complete the multidisciplinary program entirely online.

Also at CU Denver, a bachelor of applied science – professional studies is designed to meet growing demand among Colorado students, said Richard Allen, associate dean for teaching, learning and curriculum in the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. The program's stackable credentials would all be fully online, adding value for working professionals.

The College of Arts and Sciences at CU Boulder plans a bachelor's degree in public health, which students have been

requesting since 2014.

The committee also received notification of planned name changes of two degrees. At CU Boulder, the atmospheric and planetary sciences bachelor's in astronomy will become the bachelor's in astrophysical and planetary sciences. At UCCS, the computer science Ph.D. in security will become the Ph.D. in cybersecurity.

Other presentations at last week's meeting included an annual update on the PreCollegiate Development Program (PCDP) by Chris Pacheco, system PCDP coordinator. The program is currently service over 2,600 first-generation students and their families across the state.

Academic leader from the campuses also presented a "deep dive" into how new degrees are developed and approved. While the process varies across campuses, all emphasized that faculty provide the impetus for all proposals.

The next University Affairs Committee meeting is scheduled for June 4.

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