Five questions for Robi Calderaro[1]

Curiosity serves Robi Calderaro well in her role as lead technical developer on the Employee Learning and Development team. A member of Employee Services at CU system administration since 2017, she works to make online courses accessible, user-friendly and aligned with style guidelines and best practices.

“Robi is always learning, at work and in life,” said Laura Siedzick, Calderaro’s supervisor. “She seeks out and participates in technical training and conferences, sometimes at her own expense, and finds many tools and methods to share with us that improve our efficiency and quality. In all that Robi does, her primary concern is always to help and support others, whether it’s individuals on our team, external teams or leaders looking for efficiencies.”

Siedzick and Morgan Endsley both nominated Calderaro for the President’s Employee of the Year Award.[2] which is offered through the System Staff Council (SSC) in collaboration with the Office of the President. Last month, President Todd Saliman announced Calderaro as recipient of this year’s award, the highest staff honor at system administration. It recognizes CU staff who demonstrate excellence in all aspects of their work.

1. How did your career path lead to your current role with CU system administration?

I completed my master of arts degree at CU Denver in 2007. At the 2017 COLTT (Colorado Learning and Teaching with Technology) Conference, I met one of the people I had done the program with 10 years earlier. He said he was going to retire from his job at CU: “Robi, you have to apply.”

At the time, my kids were in elementary school. I was teaching at Community College of Denver. I wasn’t looking for a full-time job yet, but he was insistent. I decided, why not? The worst-case scenario is they say no. And they ended up hiring me.

I always loved teaching. I love active learning and creating learning activities to make our courses more interactive or visually pleasing. I also enjoy planning and paying attention to details.

2. What do you enjoy most about your job?

I like using my brain – using my past experience and unrelated knowledge to solve issues or create new templates for my team’s courses. I say this because I worked in a corporate job once, and we were pretty much button-pushers. Yeah, you might have ideas, but they weren’t really carried beyond your little project or your little team. So, when I started working for the University of Colorado, it was awesome, because when I had ideas, they built me up: “Oh, that is cool!” or “OK, that sounds interesting – and we cannot do it.” But at least they listened to me.

One of my strengths is connecting the dots, so that maybe something that I did five years ago at work or in a course can solve an issue that happened today.

I also enjoy helping people with pretty much anything: how to use a system, how to access it, how to make it work better. For employees who cannot access our courses or have issues with them, I can jump on a call and we can review it together.

3. Your supervisor, Laura Siedzick, said you are always learning – at work and in life. What are your keys for maintaining that outlook?

I compete with myself. I want to be better than the day before. Always learning also enables me to use new software right away because of the basics I already know. It helps me be an effective member of my team.

I’m also a firm believer that whatever I learn in any topic or subject can be useful in different circumstances. For example, I am taking a safe driving class, so I can reduce the cost of my car insurance, and I sent my team an example of the layout they used for the quizzes. My team loved it, and I was able to implement it in our courses. That’s why I say I like connecting the dots.

4. You mentioned earning your master's degree at CU Denver. What part of that experience is most memorable for you?

Analyzing the structure of online courses as I was taking them. Because way back then, online courses, at least to me, were kind of new. Also, the practical aspect of the program: learning authoring tools, and the theoretical side, learning strategies for different audiences and delivery methods.

I also appreciated how students were encouraged to share their experiences and points of view on the content covered, rather than just dumping information on people. They gave you a voice.
[3]

5. What is your reaction to being named the President's Employee of the Year?

It's a huge honor. I spent the day I learned about it half crying with joy and half smiling, all wrapped up in disbelief! I was pretty much on cloud 17,000 – because cloud nine was too low.

I am thankful to have been selected. I adore my job, and this is a confirmation that I am seen. It was heartwarming to receive so many congratulations, messages like, "Congratulations! You have always been awesome to work with. I am so proud that you got this award." I tend to do the work not expecting accolades or anything, because, honestly, I adore my job.

About the President's Employee of the Year Award[2]

Offered through the System Staff Council (SSC) in collaboration with the Office of the President, this is the highest honor presented to a system administration staff member. It recognizes employees who demonstrate excellence in all aspects of their work.

Nominees are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Outstanding Performance
- Integrity and Respect
- Responsibility
- Discovery and Excellence
- Community

The awardee receives $1,000.

In addition to recognizing Calderaro as this year's award recipient, System Staff Council also congratulated four other outstanding nominees for this year's award. Each demonstrated exceptional work ethic and values:

- **Alisha Friedrichs,** senior auditor, Internal Audit
- **Deanna Uhler,** program manager of Customer Success, Procurement Service Center
- **Stefan Martorano,** HR program director, PeopleSoft HCM, Employee Services
- **Thanh Nguyen,** director of Collaborative Initiatives, Office of Collaboration

CU Denver signs second guaranteed admissions agreement with local school district [4]

Invest in your health and your future: Enroll in an HSA by Oct. 29 [5]

CU Advantage launches Instagram account to help employees explore perks and benefits [6]

Health and Wellness Summit, open to faculty and staff systemwide, set for Nov. 12-13 [7]

UCCS hosts Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans [8]

The power of pilot grants: Studying the brain's reward center to help those struggling with addiction [9]

Federal transition update: Federal government shutdown, H-1B lawsuit, more[10]

From Oct. 10, this update from CU Federal Relations and Counsel includes information on the Federal Government Shutdown, H-1B Lawsuit, ED Resumption of Student Loan Forgiveness, NIH Research Security Policy Rescission, WH Student Loan Debt Sale Consideration, Congress Confirmation of ED/Science Officials, and MIT Declination of WH Compact Invitation.

Click here to read the post.[11]

For the latest communications and federal memos, please visit the CU System Federal Transitions Updates[12] page.

Shepherd new director of Auraria Library [13]

Conti named new chair of Biostatistics & Informatics [14]

In memoriam: Candan Duran-Aydintug[15]

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