Exploring the heart of innovation and human creativity[1]
[2]

Innovation and entrepreneurship leaders from UCCS and the CU system recently traveled to Palo Alto, California, to visit Stanford University's famous Design School (d.school), exploring the ways it approaches teaching and learning.

Led by Benjamin Kwitek, Ph.D., director of innovation and co-founder of C3 Innovation[3] at UCCS, the contingent attending the school's weeklong workshop this past summer also included two faculty members from the Innovation Program – Carolyn Gery, Ed.D., and Gail Richards, M.S. – and Ashley Taylor Tillman, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Initiative[4] director for the CU system.

"David Kelly, the founder of the d.school, was right when he said, 'Belief in your creative capacity lies at the heart of innovation,'" Kwitek said. "In a world increasingly dominated by AI, the human creativity factor needs to be emphasized. We are not robots or the Tin Man in 'The Wizard of Oz' – our faculty, staff and students have hearts."

Before joining CU, Tillman belonged to the California innovation community. She worked for IDEO, a Palo Alto product design firm that also flowed from Stanford's d.school.

"Design thinking is centered on empathy and understanding the user," Tillman said. "CU students have incredible ideas and potential that can be unlocked to solve problems and produce innovative solutions."

Besides CU, universities from across the country and around the world took part in the workshop. Maryland, Michigan Tech, New York University, Rutgers and Utah were among the institutions and systems with faculty and administrators present.

"The CU system is recognized as one of the leading hubs for innovation in the world," Kwitek said. "We need to make sure we continue to learn from the best to increase our edge and fuel the economic vitality of Colorado and beyond."

The d.school workshop provided a wealth of ideas and tools to help create new opportunities for CU, Kwitek said. Among the group's takeaways: the re-design and three d.school principles of noticing, sensemaking and experimenting. These three steps are critical for innovation; the order of steps is not necessarily as important as just getting started.
Noticing is about being aware and paying attention to problems in products, services and even human interactions. Sensemaking is about putting the puzzle together – even in an ambiguous world. What inferences can be made and how does a diverse team help reach conclusions faster were some of the key points. Experimenting is something design thinking is known for around the world. Like scientists in a lab, everyone can experiment in their environments. Creating prototypes or tinkering is a great way to make improvements and learn.
During their time on the Stanford campus, the CU team participated in activities including listening circles, working in teams without speaking, prototyping with elementary school supplies – and even dancing in a makeshift disco on the second floor of the Hasso Plattner Institute. After the music stopped, famous San Francisco DJ Lamont answered questions about mixing music, reading the room and providing entertainment as a tool to foster culture.

Richards was impressed with how the disco served as a metaphor for design thinking.

"It was the perfect exercise in tuning into the people around you, paying attention and responding based on what you learn," she said.

The team will use the new Silicon Valley knowledge to help reshape courses – beginning with some from the Bachelor of Innovation core at UCCS.

Gery believes that constant adaptation is required for professors to keep students engaged.

"Our students today were practically born with a smartphone in their hands," she said. "We need to ensure we provide education that is dynamic and relevant."

Interested in learning more? Please reach out to Benjamin Kwitek, bkwitek@uccs.edu[5], or Ashley Tillman, ashley.tillman@cu.edu[6].
[7]

Faculty win: How to integrate LinkedIn Learning into your courses [8]

'Jump scare' science: Study explains how the brain responds to fear [9]

Register now for Accessing Higher Ground: Accessible Media, Web and Technology Conference[10]

The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) and CU Boulder's ATLAS Institute are partnering to present the 28th annual Accessing Higher Ground: Accessible Media, Web and Technology Conference, set for Nov. 17-21.

The event will be at the Hilton Denver City Center, with a virtual track also available. Early registration deadline for the virtual ticket is Friday.

The conference includes over 100 onsite sessions and 42 virtual ones on topics such as accessible documents, PDFs, video, Canvas pages and alternative format. Accessing Higher Ground[11] also addresses legal and policy issues, including preparing for ADA Title II requirements; 508 & ADA compliance; campus accommodation; universal design and curriculum accessibility. The conference is relevant for IT and media professionals, course designers and faculty.

Keynote speaker is Mia Ives-Rublee, senior director for the Disability Justice Initiative at American Progress, who will deliver a talk titled "A Political War on Disability: Eugenics, the Ugly Laws, and How We Can Fight Back."

Before joining American Progress, she advocated for disability justice and inclusion at nonprofit organizations and businesses across the United States. She has worked with the Women's March, Families Belong Together, DC Action Lab and numerous other progressive organizations. She will talk about disability rights in the current environment and how to respond.

View the full five-day onsite agenda[12] or register here[13].

View the virtual agenda here.[14]

CU campus affiliates who use their campus email address receive a 5% discount off registration fees. Because CU Boulder is an AHEAD institutional member, CU Boulder affiliates receive a 10% discount.

Click here for pricing and registration.[15]

Conference site: https://accessinghigherground.org/[11]

Questions: Contact Howard Kramer, 720-351-8668 or hkramer@colorado.edu[16].

UCCS awarded TRiO Student Support Services grant [17]

From student to staffer: Karla Flores uses personal experience to help others [18]

Meet the researchers who discovered the 'undertakers' of taste, one of our least understood senses [19]

Federal transition update: Federal government shutdown, pause in shutdown RIFs, more[20]

From Oct. 17, this update from CU Federal Relations and Counsel includes information on the Federal Government Shutdown, Pause in Shutdown RIFs, Objections to Cancelled Energy Projects, WH Compact Declinations, and Chamber of Commerce H-1B Visa Suit.

Click here to read the post.[21]

For the latest communications and federal memos, please visit the CU System Federal Transitions Updates[22] page.

Xu selected to receive a 2025 Packard Fellowship award [23]

Edmonds to join UCCS as first Creative Executive in Residence [24]

Krugman receives Lifetime Achievement Award[25]

CU Regent Callie Rennison will not seek re-election in 2026[26]

Blood test may detect who will get rheumatoid arthritis, CU study finds[27]

New surgery at CU Anschutz helped paracyclist compete for Team USA[28]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/exploring-heart-innovation-and-human-creativity[2] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/ash-gail-prototyping_innovation_stanford_10-23-2025.jpg[3] https://c3innovation.uccs.edu/[4] https://www.cu.edu/impact-cu/[5] mailto:bkwitek@uccs.edu[6] mailto:ashley.tillman@cu.edu[7] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/caroline-improv_innovation_stanford_10-23-2025.jpg[8] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/faculty-win-how-integrate-linkedin-learning-your-courses[9] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/jump-scare-science-study-explains-how-brain-responds-fear[10] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/register-now-accessing-higher-ground-accessible-media-web-and-technology-conference[11] https://accessinghigherground.org/[12] https://accessinghigherground.org/schedule-2025/#cs_2025-11-19[13] https://web.cvent.com/event/83e56abf-78e6-4ef4-bb16-93e9b40f15c7/summary[14] https://accessinghigherground.org/accepted-virtual-sessions-ahg-2025/[15] https://accessinghigherground.org/pricing-2025/[16] mailto:hkramer@colorado.edu[17] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/uccs-awarded-trio-student-support-services-grant[18] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/student-staffer-karla-flores-uses-personal-experience-help-others[19] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/meet-researchers-who-discovered-undertakers-taste-one-our-least-understood-senses[20] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/federal-transition-update-federal-government-shutdown-pause-shutdown-rifs-more[21] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-update-101725[22] https://www.cu.edu/federal-transition-updates[23] https://connections.cu.edu/people/xu-selected-receive-2025-packard-fellowship-award[24] https://connections.cu.edu/people/edmonds-join-uccs-first-creative-executive-residence[25] https://connections.cu.edu/people/krugman-receives-lifetime-achievement-award[26] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/cu-regent-callie-rennison-will-not-seek-re-election-2026[27] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/blood-test-may-detect-who-will-get-rheumatoid-arthritis-cu-study-finds[28] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/new-surgery-cu-anschutz-helped-paracyclist-compete-team-usa