Five questions for Erick Mueller[1]
[2]

Movement is key to the mission of Erick Mueller. Travel – be it for teaching, for business, or leisure and discovery – figures prominently in conversation about his life. In teaching at CU Boulder's Leeds School of Business, he shows how to take an idea and advance it into fruition.

The executive director at Leeds Deming Center for Entrepreneurship, his lessons are informed by experience, having helped build business ventures from the ground up. Some were big successes, others not. He kept a smile on his face throughout because he was following his passion.
[3]

His travels have taken him to more than 50 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and Australia.

"I love getting outdoors, and I love road trips with my wife and kiddos and our pups," Mueller said of his free time. "You just can't beat that. I've had the chance to go on global adventures myself, but to share it now with our kids – we have a 7-year-old and a 10-year-old – is super fun."

Free time also means an opportunity to give back. Earlier this year, he led a workshop, "Demystifying Entrepreneurship," in Buena Vista.

"The goal is to elevate entrepreneurship and innovation in rural Colorado," he said. "We volunteer, travel there and help people in rural Colorado start and grow their businesses and create jobs.

"Making a difference in the world is really key. My greatest fear in life has been to not make as big of a difference as possible in the world, with the talents and abilities I've been blessed with, before I'm dead."

1. You rode a Harley-Davidson motorcycle across the country to gather interviews for a study and documentary on what makes people happy. What led you to choose that journey and what was the result?

As a teacher and as a boss, I was always asked a lot of questions about, what should I do with my life? In my teaching role, other questions were, what should I study? Where should I live? What kind of job should I look for? How much money should I make? As a boss, it's similar things: What kind of role should I play in the business? How long should I do it?

I found myself always responding with one question back: What makes you happy? If they said, "What makes me happy is that I make a difference and have an impact in my work," well, maybe you should work for a smaller company or a startup. If what makes you happy is stability and a solid paycheck and to be part of a team, then maybe it's a different piece of advice I share.

I had just exited a venture. I would work really hard, build a venture up, then exit: Either the business failed or was sold to another company. Then I'd take a six-month sabbatical and just experience life – be rather than do. It dawned on me in my sabbatical in 2006, I didn't want to just go and sit on the beach. I did that in my 20s. I wanted to have some meaning.

I wanted to understand what makes people happy and I wanted to feel it. I wanted to experience it. I thought, what if I start building a documentary about this thing called happiness? Because it's been front and center for me in my life.

So I threw my leg over my Harley and cranked it up. I just traveled the country for three months on my hog. It was like Huck Finn camping along the Mississippi River and talking to the heartland of America about what makes them happy. I did it so I could be a better teacher, a better boss, ultimately a better dad. It was such a grand adventure. Really just magical.

I came out of that experience feeling what makes people happy as opposed to intellectualizing it. I have 73 hours of footage of people sharing their intimate stories about happiness and life and regrets, etc. So that was the framework,

and now I have more insight into what this thing called happiness is.

2. You've been involved in growing several businesses. What, if anything, did those endeavors have in common, and how do the experiences inform your teaching?
[4]

There are common threads. Most important by far was the people. Who you invite on the bus is really the most important part of your venture. I understood it wasn't about the money or where I lived or the title I had. It was about the people I was going to work with for 60 to 80 hours a week. I'd much rather clean up dog poop with a bunch of kick-ass folks rather than try to go to the moon with a bunch of jerks. I naturally just knew that.

When I earned my undergraduate degree, there was this gentleman, Jim Plouffe, who ran a first-aid business – supplying OSHA-required kits. I'd had offers from GM, Kodak, Merck – big offers with expense reports, cars, big money. Then there was this startup thing where I'd make half as much and work twice as hard. Obviously, you know where I went. The reason is because of the owner of the business and his small team at the time: I knew I could make an impact, I knew I'd have fun working with this team and I knew I could learn a lot.

The other thread that comes to mind is, you really do have to love what you do. It's such a cliché nowadays, but I have lived that and experienced that. I've had moments where I didn't really enjoy what I was doing: I was helping a friend develop a hedge fund, which could have been very lucrative. But there was no passion. It was all numbers and spreadsheets and sterile. I just didn't enjoy it.

Those things absolutely inform my teaching in the classroom. We definitely do a lot of team building in my classrooms: I talk about team dynamics and choosing wisely as you start your businesses. And I talk every day about being into what you do and being passionate. I make sure my students realize the most important thing is that you really enjoy what you do.

3. What can you tell me about your current business venture?

It's called Funovation. We create amusement attractions for theme parks and fun centers around the world. Our metric truly is how many smiles we create around the world – how can we make the world a happier place? Our vision is to remind the world to play. We manufacture and market a laser maze system, which is in over 370 locations in 29 countries. We have 13 locations in Colorado; the closest one is in Fat Cats in Westminster.

We create smiles. That is our shared vision. To be a Funovator, you must share our vision that when you walk in the door every morning, it's all about making the world a happier place.

We judge the success of our venture like any other venture: our revenue, how many jobs we create, our growth rate, etc. But the metric that's most important to us is how many smiles we create in the world. We correlate one play of our laser maze with one smile. So we're tied into all of our systems around the world. We've created around 68 million smiles. So we're super excited we've created a product that allows people to take a respite from stress and just go play.

One of the most heartwarming things I see is a grandma who can't do a roller coaster, because her body's not ready for that, right? But grandma can hold grandson's hand and go into a laser maze and just be delighted with the lasers and sound effects. That shared experience is super special. Those are the kinds of things that really drive you to build a venture and work your butt off when you can make an impact.

It's been a lot of fun. If it wasn't fun, we'd have to change our name.

4. You earned your MBA at Leeds, where now you're a faculty member. How did your experience earning your degree influence your approach to teaching?

It's affected my teaching in a very positive way. I have literally sat in the seats that my students sit in, right? I think that gives you empathy and a perspective unlike any other experience.

I remember as a student, there were a lot of faculty who taught their agenda. There's nothing wrong with that, per se. I've had some amazing professors who really shared their research and it's a very positive thing. But sometimes this wasn't what I was expecting to learn.

Having paid tuition here and getting my degree here and sitting in these seats, I switch it around. When I walk into my first class, the perspective I give my students is, you are paying me to teach you something, so what do you want to learn? I create a working agreement with every class I've taught for the last 15 years. I tell the students, write down what you'd like to learn. And they write, I want to learn how to raise venture capital. Or, how do you build a team? How do you get over failure? I compile it and come up with a framework for what we do. I adapt probably 20 percent of every class to what those students are excited about. We co-create the experience together.

Experiential learning is the key. When I was a student, those were the best experiences for me, when a professor allowed us to get our hands dirty. I have incorporated that into my classroom. All of the faculty in entrepreneurship here do that.

Throughout the class and at the end, I ask, did you get your tuition dollars' worth out of this class? If not, tell me why, so we can adapt and make it better.

5. What does your role as executive director of the Deming Center for Entrepreneurship entail?

In terms of leading the center and teaching entrepreneurism, our mission is to inspire and empower the world to transform ideas into action. The keyword is action. Entrepreneurship happens at the intersection of having the idea and taking action. So that's the tool set we empower our students with. It's when you take action that you can say you're an entrepreneur.

The output of our work may be starting a venture, but that's not our goal. Our goal is to impart the entrepreneurial way of thinking. The entrepreneurial way of thinking can help you if you go work for IBM or if you start your own venture.

One area we're super excited to explore is global entrepreneurship. That's something our tenure-track faculty are researching. We're also excited about cross-disciplinary entrepreneurship or cross-campus entrepreneurship.

I truly believe that entrepreneurship can change the world. I spend a month every year in Africa through one of our programs, Entrepreneurship and Empowerment in South Africa. We take students and teach them how to consult and work with people in the slums of Africa. This is where families of five live on a dollar a day. And every year I see the impact that entrepreneurship has on these folks. We're teaching them and empowering them with the tools of entrepreneurship to make their lives better. It's pretty powerful.

I've experienced it personally in my ventures. It's very difficult but very rewarding to create something from nothing. It's pretty cool. To empower people with this way of thinking is really a gift, and it's a privilege to do what I do. I think the work we do is pretty special in that regard. I'm the luckiest guy I know to be able to work with students and a community to give them the tools to live a better life and make the world a better place.

Regents select members of presidential search committee[5]

The University of Colorado Board of Regents on Wednesday named the members of the Presidential Search Advisory Committee, which will assist in the process of selecting the institution's next president.

The search committee is chaired by Regents Heidi Ganahl and Irene Griego. The membership of the committee is outlined in Regent Policy 3 (E). Members are:
Faculty representatives: Tom Cech (CU Boulder); Christopher Bell (CU Colorado Springs); Joanne Addison (CU Denver); Laura Borgelt (CU Anschutz Medical Campus) **Dean representative:** Bobby Braun (CU Boulder) **Staff**

representative: Corey Edwards (CU Denver) **Student representative:** Alex Holmgren (CU Boulder) **Alumni representatives:** Brian Davidson, Frank McNulty **Community representatives:** Pam Shockley-Zalabak, Cy Harvey, Jake Zambrano, Ben Ochoa
The committee will assist the Board of Regents, which is responsible for naming the next president.

“We’re pleased to have an engaged, diverse committee that represents CU’s key constituents, both inside and outside the university,” said Sue Sharkey, chair of the board. “Selecting the next CU president is a critically important task and we feel we have the right people involved.”

The search advisory committee will get its charge from the Board of Regents at its Nov. 8 meeting in Colorado Springs. The search will officially commence when the board receives the charge.

The next president will replace Bruce Benson, who announced that he plans to retire from CU in July after 11 years at the helm. He is the longest-serving CU president in 65 years.

Campus communities provide input at presidential search town halls[6]
[7]
[8]

The regents leading the search for CU’s next president heard common themes as well as unique perspectives from faculty, staff and students across CU’s campuses in a series of town halls aimed at getting input on the university’s next leader.

Regents Heidi Ganahl and Irene Griego hosted the meetings at CU’s four campuses over the past couple of weeks.

“The common word we heard on every campus was passion. The CU community wants someone with passion for CU and passion for higher education,” Ganahl said. “As the regents chairing the presidential search committee, we couldn’t agree more.”

Griego said they also heard some insight the board members hadn’t considered.

“It’s clear this is a critical search for the university and we very much appreciated the engaged and thoughtful perspective from faculty, staff and students,” Griego said.

CU’s next president will succeed Bruce Benson, who told the board he intends to retire from CU in July after 11 years at the helm, making him the longest-serving CU president in 65 years.

Another common thread was ensuring that the next president understands the unique attributes of each campus while also harnessing the collective power of the CU system. Groups at each of the town halls suggested the new president should be more visible and accessible on each campus, connecting with the key constituencies of students, faculty and staff.

Similarly, CU’s president has to connect with the university’s external constituents, including alumni, donors, and business and community leaders across the state and beyond. Every group talked about the importance of a close working relationship with the Colorado Legislature, while stressing that the president needs to be political, but not partisan.

Griego and Ganahl posed the question as to whether the next president needs to have an academic background or experience outside higher education or both. The consensus was that a sound understanding of higher education, its traditions and the environment in which it operates is absolutely necessary, but a traditional academic background is not. Representatives of systemwide Faculty Council and Staff Council shared that their groups have had extensive discussions on the issue and generally reached a similar conclusion.

There was also a consensus that a familiarity with Colorado is important, but the board should also cast a wide net in its search for the next president.

The regents asked the crowds on each campus to provide one word to describe qualities or characteristics they would like to see in the next president. Responses included “bold,” “passionate,” “empathetic,” “approachable” and “accomplished.”

Griego said the sessions were quite valuable for the regents because they heard things they hadn’t expected to but also had some of their notions reinforced. Ganahl and Griego provided a synopsis of each campus session for their fellow regents.

“We want this process to be an ongoing dialogue with the university community,” Griego said. “We hope our faculty, staff and students who were unable to attend the town halls will continue to provide input as we go through the process.”

The regents set up a presidential search web site at https://www.cu.edu/presidential-search[9], which includes a mechanism to provide input.

New hotline offers support for everyday stress or mental illness[10]

[11]

The University of Colorado is offering all employees a new option for quick access to mental health services – The Real Help Hotline[12] at 833-533-CHAT (2428).

Life is full of stressful events. Pivotal moments like buying a home, having a child or going through a divorce are obvious sources of stress. But day-to-day obligations as seemingly simple as paying the bills can become overwhelming, too. Beyond the typical struggles we all face, depression, anxiety, addiction and other, more serious, health problems are prevalent in modern society[13].

These are all matters of mental wellness.

Often, support and treatment can be hard to find. According to The Denver Post[14], “the wait to see a psychiatrist in (Denver) is about five months long. Colorado has only 15 psychiatrists per 100,000 people, compared with 92 primary-care physicians.”

This deficit led Gov. Hickenlooper to take action in 2014 when he launched Colorado’s first statewide mental health crisis line[15].

“While public officials and hospital systems continue to search for solutions, we believe it’s important to implement a plan of our own so that support is immediately available to all faculty and staff,” said Felicity O’Herron, chief human resources officer and associate vice president of Employee Services.

That’s why CU Employee Services collaborated with the CU Health Plan Administration, CU Medicine and UCHealth to launch the Real Help Hotline.

The Real Help Hot Line[12] makes it easy to access professional counselors who can provide immediate crisis counseling or offer assistance finding local resources to anyone facing a problem they can’t seem to solve. The service is free and confidential, available 24 hours a day and open to all employees.

The number to call is 833-533-CHAT (2428).

For additional information, download posters and flyers[16] or email questions@becolorado.org[17].

Faculty Council Committee Corner: Communications[18]

Editor's note: This is an ongoing CU Connections series in which the Faculty Council[19] highlights each of its committees and their efforts.

Faculty Council Communications Committee

Committee directive/charge

The Communications Committee is charged with enhancing the shared governance process within the University of Colorado system by improving communication among faculty, staff and administration in multiple ways[20].

The latest news

This month, we announced a new commentary series in CU Connections, Faculty Voices. This new forum is designed to foster conversation about topics and issues on the minds of faculty at the four campuses. We welcome article proposals exploring timely topics through personal opinion, experience, or research. Faculty are invited to submit their commentary ideas to the Communications Committee here[21] or see more in the Call for Proposals[22].

Last year's activities

In the 2017-18 academic year, our committee worked on two new communication initiatives to help promote shared governance and dialogue across the four campuses. The first is this ongoing Committee Corner series. Four of the Faculty Council committees wrote articles about their activities throughout the year, including the Women's Committee's work on lactation pods[23], the Educational Policy and University Standards Committee's work on Article 5 revisions[24], and the Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee's work[25] on the cultural climate across campuses and their joint symposia with the LGBTQ+ Committee. Watch for more articles from the seven Faculty Council committees throughout this academic year.

Our second initiative was investigation into the new commentary series launched this month, Faculty Voices, mentioned above.[22] To launch the Faculty Voices article, our committee presented the idea and handed out surveys at faculty assemblies during their meetings to gather feedback on how to structure the series and whether it would be a useful contribution. We received 46 responses from the assembly members with 72 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing and only 4 percent disagreeing with the proposal. Qualitative comments applauded the initiative and expressed enthusiastic support: "Position debates are an excellent way to get involvement"; "Great idea! Thank you for proposing it!", and "I think this is a great idea and way to get faculty voices heard across the entire CU system." We also received several instructive comments that helped us to guide the structure of the Faculty Voices series:

"Do you have a committee to come up with themes?"

"It would be great to have some data in the proposal about how many people actually read Connections. Thank you for your work!"

"I think this is a great idea and way to get faculty voices heard across the entire CU system."

"Need to have a process for choosing articles to allow for four-campus representation"

"How does this compare or compete with the local AMC news?"

Respondents also recommended incentives, such as certificates of recognition, letters for faculty dossiers, and an annual lunch for the authors and CU system leadership. Based on this input, we decided to offer CU promotional items and a letter of recognition. Our committee also proposed several topics for consideration in the call for commentaries [22] and our process for selecting articles will monitor campus representation to ensure, as much as possible, equal representation.

Vote in the Faculty Voices poll.[26]

We welcome your ideas for this series, and especially your commentary proposals[21]!

Current Projects

This year, in addition to publishing the Faculty Voices commentaries, our major activity is the formulation of an online Faculty Communications Guidebook that will build upon the existing Faculty Handbooks from the system and each of the campuses to ensure faculty can easily find answers to all of their questions, whether it's about benefits, grading, promoting your publications, or obtaining transit or parking passes on your campus, etc. While these answers are often available online, based on our initial research, the web locations are not always immediately evident. We believe a more centralized location for all of these topics that may span multiple issue areas but come together in a faculty member's work could be an extremely useful resource. We will be working on this with departments across the system and campuses, with each assembly, and through a survey in early 2019. Our goal is to ensure we can build and maintain a website that will be dynamic and useful without replicating the work of others.

Committee members

All Faculty Council committees have representatives from the CU system and each of the campuses. **The Communications Committee is currently recruiting for two representatives from CU Boulder. Please direct any questions to Committee Chair Carrie Makarewicz** (carrie.makarewicz@ucdenver.edu[27]).
Carrie Makarewicz, Chair CU Denver, Architecture and Planning Carmen Stavrositu, Vice Chair CU Colorado Springs, Communication Jenny Filipetti, Secretary CU Denver, Inworks Neil Box CU Anschutz, Medicine Judy Scott CU Colorado Springs, Nursing Lori Bryan CU Colorado Springs, Trauma, Health, and Hazards Center Ken McConnellogue CU system, vice president, University Communication Cathy Beuten CU system, University Relations Jay Dedrick CU system, University Relations
Click here[28] for more information on the Communications Committee.

Best-selling author and suicide survivor Kevin Hines to speak at CU Boulder[29]

UCCS, Penrose-St. Francis break ground on Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center[30]

Food for thought: Annual luncheon awards creativity[31]

Nursing History Center, a 'hidden gem' at CU Anschutz, provides window into field's past[32]

Advancing our understanding of the pharmacokinetics of CBD in children with epilepsy [33]

Santoro elected to National Academy of Medicine [34]

Bowman celebrates induction in national academy of medicine [35]

Spencer wins top award for study of cellular proliferation [36]

Dougherty receives Doug Faires Award[37]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/five-questions-erick-mueller[2] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/mueller_feat.jpg[3] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/mueller_02.jpg[4] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/mueller_funven.jpg[5] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/regents-select-members-presidential-search-committee[6] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/campus-communities-provide-input-presidential-search-town-halls[7] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/townhall_feat.jpg[8] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/townhall_01.jpg[9] https://www.cu.edu/presidential-search[10] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/new-hotline-offers-support-everyday-stress-or-mental-illness[11] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/hotline_feat.jpg[12] https://www.becolorado.org/program/the-real-help-hotline/[13] https://adaa.org/about-adaa/press-room/facts-statistics[14] http://extras.denverpost.com/mentalillness/index.html[15] http://coloradocrisisservices.org/assets/HotlinePressRelease.pdf[16] https://www.cu.edu/docs/real-help-hotline-posters-and-flyers[17] mailto:questions@becolorado.org[18] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/faculty-council-committee-corner-communications-0[19] https://www.cu.edu/faculty-council[20] https://www.cu.edu/faculty-council/committees-0[21] https://connections.cu.edu/cu-faculty-voices[22] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/faculty-invited-contribute-new-cu-connections-commentaries[23] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/faculty-council-committee-corner-women[24] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/faculty-council-committee-corner-educational-policy-and-university-standards[25] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/faculty-council-committee-corner-ethnic-and-minority-affairs[26] https://connections.cu.edu/poll/will-you-submit-article-faculty-voices[27] mailto:carrie.makarewicz@ucdenver.edu[28] https://www.cu.edu/faculty-council/committees/communications-committee[29] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/best-selling-author-and-suicide-survivor-kevin-hines-speak-cu-boulder[30] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/uccs-penrose-st-francis-break-ground-hybl-sports-medicine-and-performance-center[31] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/food-thought-annual-luncheon-awards-creativity[32] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/nursing-history-center-hidden-gem-cu-anschutz-provides-window-fields-past[33] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/advancing-our-understanding-

pharmacokinetics-cbd-children-epilepsy[34] https://connections.cu.edu/people/santoro-elected-national-academy-medicine[35] https://connections.cu.edu/people/bowman-celebrates-induction-national-academy-medicine[36] https://connections.cu.edu/people/spencer-wins-top-award-study-cellular-proliferation[37] https://connections.cu.edu/people/dougherty-receives-doug-faires-award