Five questions for Maureen Stabio[1]

Maureen Stabio's interest in anatomy and medicine was sparked in high school. She credits her high school anatomy teacher – Ms. Skibo, now Mrs. Moore – with first stoking that interest.

"Then, I received a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity through a family connection to observe a cardiovascular surgery and see a real human heart," Stabio said. "I remember so vividly the moment I saw that amazing and beautiful human heart beating in the body of a patient under the careful hands of the physician. I was awestruck, and I wanted more. From there, my love of human anatomy was born, and the pursuit of higher education followed."

Stabio's early interest in cardiology took a detour after she took her first neuroscience course, "and my mind was even more blown by the complexity and mystery of the brain."Today, 20 years later, Stabio is an associate professor of neuroanatomy in the Modern Human Anatomy Program at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus. She directs the neuroscience curriculum for the CU School of Medicine.

Stabio recently received funding through the Timmerhaus Fund Ambassadors to boost her Experience Anatomy initiative, an interactive anatomy learning lab[2] of plastinated human organs, as well as virtual dissection using augmented reality technology at CU Anschutz. With four events she's planning for the current school year, Stabio aims to reach hundreds of teens across the Denver area.

"I want to provide a transformative, hands-on, interactive experience for the youth of Colorado who may not be as fortunate as I was that special day my sophomore year of high school when I saw the human heart," she said.

**1. How did the idea for Experience Anatomy come about, and how will the Timmerhaus Ambassadors funding help?**

Klaus Timmerhaus' mission was to promote public understanding of the value of education in Colorado and beyond. When I read about the Timmerhaus Ambassador program[3], I thought that there is no better way to get the public excited and engaged in learning than to hold, touch, feel and experience it themselves. And we can do that with anatomy.

My interest in outreach grew in 2016, when I started plastinating human brains. I inherited the WeLL-COMe (Wellness, Lifelong Learning and Career Orientation Mentorship) program[4], where middle school students can come in and hold brains. With middle school students, I'm planting a seed. With high school students, I hope to get them excited about the idea of higher education.
[5]

**2. What's the nature of the Experience Anatomy events you're planning for this school year?**

Experience Anatomy is an interactive anatomy learning lab that provides students an immersive hands-on experience with anatomy. Students hold real human organs, learn about organ transplant technology, and virtually dissect a human brain in virtual reality (VR). VR is something I'm adding that's new this year. I personally don't love VR, because I'm not a high-tech person. But I saw the value of VR in breaking through to a kid whose only interest is videogames. I'm trying to use the love language of that generation to get them interested in science.

We piloted two programs over the summer, trying out various lesson plans, and we have multiple Saturday day camps scheduled for high schoolers this fall. We have an official program on Oct. 21 that we're doing in collaboration with the CU Pre-Health Scholars Program[6]; they have a high school academy. We also have a girls' camp Nov. 4. I have about four more schools I'm reaching out to. (High school educators who are interested can contact Stabio at maureen.stabio@cuanschutz.edu.)[7]

**3. Tell me about other STEM outreach volunteer work you do with high schools. Why is such outreach important?**

Beyond just the intrinsic value of sharing the importance of science with the next generation, on a deeper level, outreach is critical for our society. Our modern culture has unfortunately embraced an ethos centered around expressive individualism and self-actualization. The constant focus on self, paired with one's subjective feelings about self (that is either helped or hurt by social media) has created a narcissistic and discontented society.

The antidote? Service. Serving others gets the focus off "me and my needs" and moves the focus to others and their needs. Communities that serve others together, grow stronger together.

The greatest reward I have in doing outreach is seeing the impact it has on my graduate students who volunteer. This is why a core component of all of my outreach efforts is the involvement of graduate students who work in teams together to teach and serve. Some of my former graduate student leaders have gone on to lead other programs in their communities based on the positive experiences they've had in service projects at CU Anschutz.

When I'm doing outreach, some kids say to me, 'I can't afford higher education, it's impossible to pay for.' So we had two graduate students talk about their strategy for paying for higher education – every pathway out there. So we'll do that again.

**4. Last year, you were the CU Anschutz recipient of the Open Educational Resources (OER) Champion Award from the CU system. What was your project?**
[8]

We're working on digitization of the CU Plastinated Organ Library[9]. I started out with one plastinated brain and we now have more than 50 physical specimens.

When I was taking anatomy in high school, in 1994, that was when Vic Spitzer[10] published the Visible Human. My parents got me a coffee table book of pictures from the Visible Human Project. I never imagined I'd get to work with Dr. Spitzer, and now I'm creating the Visible Brain. It will be a chapter in the Visible Human software program.

**5. How has teaching and research in modern human anatomy evolved since you first entered the field?**

As you can imagine, there are not a lot of new discoveries in anatomy. What's really evolving is the marriage between animation, imaging, modeling and medicine, such as the use of 3D printing for surgical planning via CU's Inworks[11] program, and the use of 3D animation for patient education.

The use of immersive, real-time, 3D technology in anatomy is exploding. The modern anatomist must not only be a master of classical anatomy but also be fluent in 3D virtual anatomy. Advancements in medical imaging, machine learning-driven segmentation, surface scanning and 3D printing have made it crucial for modern anatomists to be cross-trained in classical anatomy and digital cadaver preservation.

However, most graduate anatomy education programs lack formal instruction in 3D technology. To address this gap, in 2022, with the support of an Epic Mega Grant, we established the Anatomical Imaging and Modeling (AIM) track[12] within the Modern Human Anatomy Master's Program at CU. Our presentation focuses on our training framework for students in industry-standard software, the development of independent research skills, and the achievements and experiences of our students.

I feel so lucky to have a job where I get to work on all these fun projects with students who are really excited.

Philip DiStefano to retire as CU Boulder chancellor, lead in other campus roles [13]

## D'Elia recognized as President's Employee of the Year[14]
[15]

Gwendolyn D'Elia, training specialist with Advancement at CU system administration, recently was honored as the 2024 President's Employee of the Year.

D'Elia received a plaque and $1,000 award, which is presented by System Staff Council[16], during a Sept. 14 ceremony at 1800 Grant St.

Nine other nominees for the award, given in recognition and appreciation of exceptional job performance, also were recognized, as were many system administration employees who reached milestone years of service during the 2023 fiscal year.

CU President Todd Saliman attended and spoke at the event, as did Felicity O'Herron, vice president and chief human resources officer.

Some of the comments from D'Elia's nomination and letters of support include:
"She feels passionate about helping others, whether it be through providing a training, joining a committee, or ensuring others are informed of available opportunities. The CU system and the Office of Advancement are better for Gwen's contributions and involvements." "Gwen is a beacon of dedication, passion and commitment. Her enthusiasm for continuous learning, innovative problem-solving, and inclusive leadership resonates throughout every interaction. Her profound impact on our team, the Advancement community, and the broader CU network is undeniable." "If anyone has a concern or question in our department, Gwen is happy to chat with you. I personally had something come up last winter that I brought to Gwen, and she promptly ran it up the proverbial flagpole after listening carefully to my concerns. With Gwen, you know she cares."
The year's other nominees for the President's Employee of the Year Award were:

**Will Angel, Advancement.** "With his unwavering positivity, collaborative spirit and commitment to inclusion and excellence, Will enhances CU every day."

**Faraz Ali, University Information Services.** "When Faraz suggests that we adopt a new technology, he clearly articulates and advocates for the overall value that this solution brings to CU. Faraz has the maturity and judgment to not be enticed by the "new and shiny" solutions, but rather to see through the hype and select the best solutions to further our mission."

**Susan Cleveland, CU System Gift Planning.** "Her inquisitive nature leads her to constantly expand her knowledge, which allows her to form deeper connections with donors and colleagues alike."

**Emily Davies, University Relations.** "Emily's innovative and creative approach to problem-solving has led to significant improvements in various processes. Her ability to think outside the box and propose unique solutions has had a positive impact on our team's productivity and efficiency."

**Shayla DeYoung, CU System Gift Planning.** "She makes calls fun and productive at the same time. She's easy to communicate with, and she is a wonderful advocate for her peers. She wants her colleagues to do well, and she regularly speaks up during calls to brag about them for any number of things."

**Crystal DiCino, Procurement Service Center.** "In our ever-changing landscape of procurement, Crystal has been one of the most valuable assets the PSC has to translate departmental, legal and compliance changes to both her team members and campus customers in an effort to keep the procurement system functioning and adapting for the future."

**Kristina Mendez, Office of University Controller.** "Her cheerful customer-first attitude creates a comfortable atmosphere for employees to share problems and seek answers. She is attentive to the needs of a diverse clientele and communicates sensitively with all."

**Michael Provine, Advancement.** “Mike is the guru of the new Salesforce CU Ascend. He finds answers to users’ requests with patience. Also, he rebuilt ODS data base with reporting tables from CU Ascend Database.”

**Tricia Strating, Employee Services.** “From a customer service standpoint, Tricia’s excellent ability to provide details and direction while she maintains a neutral stance in representing system administration and our campus constituents is invaluable. Tricia’s positive attitude and collaborative style contribute to the customer-centric value of her work.”

Employees recognized with **Years of Service Awards** were:

**35 Years**

Jenny Rattana

**30 Years**

Donna Sewell

Steve Zweck-Bronner

**25 Years**

Gary Bomba

Peter Ciacco

Lisa Landis

**20 Years**

Laura Haller

Sheri Jungman

Carolyn Proctor

Rick Rowcotsky

Kim Wendelin

**15 Years**

Anna Aguirre

Fiftwo Baldwin

Elizabeth Collins

Ryan Day

Tara Dressler

Brian Dyet

Kari Henningsen

Jean Howe

Brian Hutchison

Connie Johnson

Michelle Krech

Matthew Ledoux

Matthew Lemme

Kevin McCarty

Katherine Miller

Scott Munson

Denise Nakamichi

Sharon Price

Nora Sandoval

Teena Shepperson-Turner

Sara Wuorinen

**10 Years**

Erin Benoy Tilbury

Anthony Brooks

Ali Clark

Maureen Durkin

Kadie Goodman

Melissa Kent

Sarju Khadka

Meg Kinney

Toby Lutz

Adam Newby

Faith Perry

Viet Phan

Nonie Roberts

RyAnne Scott

Angelica Throckmorton

Rakesh Vangapati

Marita Vieth

Michael Wolbrom

**Five years**

Laura Abeyta-Martinez

Manali Agrawal

Faraz Ali

William Armstrong

Rachelle Beauplan

Robi Calderaro

Tahlya Cox

Lisa Damboise

Samantha Fildish

Gregory Henning

Stephen Heymann

Christina Honne

Dave Korman

Samuel Lester

Deborah Lowe

Vicky McPheron

Felicity O’Herron

Alicia Pickell

Elise Ridgway

Raychel Roy

Jonathan Sanders

Heather Savino

Tanya Scott

Tony Sengphirom

Shannon Sunderland

Timothy Thomas

Jaya Vaidyanathan

David Williams

## Coleman Institute launches new electronic newsletter[17]

The Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities[18] invites anyone interested to subscribe to its new electronic newsletter.

Click here[19] to access the form and begin your subscription.

Based in system administration at 1800 Grant St., the Coleman Institute works to catalyze and integrate advances in technology that improve quality of life for people with cognitive disabilities and their families. Cognitive disabilities include intellectual disability, Alzheimer's disease, brain injury, stroke and many others.

Cathy Bodine,[20] Ph.D., professor at CU Denver l Anschutz Medical Campus, is executive director of the institute.

The CU Board of Regents established the Coleman Institute in 2001 following a private endowment by Bill and Claudia Coleman, who were founding donors. It was CU's first systemwide institute.

For more information, go to the Coleman Institute's website: https://www.cu.edu/coleman[21].

## Photo feature: Chancellor Emeritus Venkat Reddy breakfast reception [22]

## The power of math: A Q&A with STEM educator Dennis DeBay [23]

## Military standout brings strength to women in medicine [24]

## The appeal of an almighty 'super app' to rule your phone[25]

International award recognizes Luger's contributions to life science[26]

Heller Center hosts Deloria, first Indigenous Fellow [27]

Ge elected as fellow of American Geophysical Union [28]

National Institutes of Health awards $54 million to CU Anschutz[29]

U.S. National Science Foundation awards CU Boulder physics center $25 million to continue work [30]

Local economists say inflation is cooling down, but prices still remain high[31]

**Links**
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/five-questions-maureen-stabio[2] https://www.anatomylibrary.org/[3] https://www.cu.edu/ptsp/timmerhaus-fund-ambassadors[4] https://news.cuanschutz.edu/news-stories/middle-schoolers-dissect-brains-peer-healthcare-careers[5] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/img_1907_may_2023_middle_school_field_trip_stabio_five_questions_09-28-2023.jpg[6] https://www.cuanschutz.edu/offices/inclusion-and-outreach/programs/cups[7] mailto:maureen.stabio@cuanschutz.edu[8] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/picture4_vr_brain_stabio_five_questions_09-28-2023.jpg[9] http://www.anatomylibrary.org/[10] https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/cell-and-developmental-biology/faculty/vic-spitzer[11] https://engineering.ucdenver.edu/inworks/about[12] https://news.cuanschutz.edu/news-stories/high-tech-track-opens-career-options-for-anatomists[13] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/philip-distefano-retire-cu-boulder-chancellor-lead-other-campus-roles[14] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/d-elia-recognized-president-s-employee-year[15] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/img_1079_pres_eoy_award_crop_for_story_page_09-28-2023.jpg[16] https://www.cu.edu/ssc/awards/presidents-employee-year-award[17] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/coleman-institute-launches-new-electronic-newsletter[18] https://www.cu.edu/coleman[19] https://www.cu.edu/coleman/forms/newsletter-sign[20] https://www.cu.edu/coleman/about-us/executive-director[21] https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cu.edu%2Fcoleman&data=05%7C01%7Cdedrick%40cu.edu%7Cefb5b7c845744d354be608dbbae06cbd%7Ce889e28f74d447f287e853732cbbe7ec%7C0%7C0%7C638309245285761956%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=3Svm31MMUZvYq2E4jVuT%2FhacBuZHzWhhbLg

F5AgWqY0%3D&reserved=0[22] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/photo-feature-chancellor-emeritus-venkat-reddy-breakfast-reception[23] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/power-math-qa-stem-educator-dennis-debay[24]
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