



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER 9, 2025

Message from the Provost & Executive Vice President



Dear Colleagues:

These next two weeks represent the all-too-familiar “final sprint” of the academic semester.

As you prepare to consolidate your remaining lessons, evaluate student progress, and bring the semester to a successful close, I want to acknowledge the tremendous effort you already have invested in your students, your research, and this institution. You have given everything to guide your students’ intellectual growth throughout the semester, and this time of year is a culmination of months of your thoughtful teaching and mentoring. I, like your students, am deeply inspired by you.

Once the semester is in our rearview mirror and you have an opportunity to catch your breath and recenter your focus, I hope you will be able to step away from work and enjoy time for yourself and with your loved ones. If you are looking for a good, quick read over the winter break,

I have a recommendation: *Dirty Knowledge* by Dr. Julia Schleck, Professor and Chair of the CSU Department of English.

Dr. Schleck’s book was cited as a must-read resource at a recent Faculty Council Academic Freedom Forum co-hosted by the Executive Committee of Faculty Council and the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President. *Dirty Knowledge* explores the failures of traditional conceptions of academic freedom while examining and rejecting the increasing tendency to view academic freedom as free speech. It is a profound read and here is my favorite excerpt:

“The knowledge produced and disseminated at universities has always been and will always be dirty, shot through with the politics and material inequalities that characterize our society at large. Providing a special place for those contentions and an especially strong set of contenders is what the university offers to our democracy, and it is what should be continued to be funded by our communities. Like a wild profusion of plants, professors compete for the resources they need to generate the intellectual seeds specific to their form of life, seeds that universities will continue to store in the expectation that someday we as a society will need them to maintain and improve our quality of life, or even to perpetuate our species on earth. Universities should be sure to foster with a deliberate distribution of material resources the strangest, least useful and most contrarian of these plants to ensure that we have the diversity we need to survive the coming storms. This new grounding for academic freedom gives us a better rationale for the renewal of the special employment protections under which previous generations of faculty have flourished. Such a renewal will enable us once again to reach for the heavens in our pursuit of knowledge, without forgetting that we are firmly rooted in the dirt.”

Dirty Knowledge is an amazing book with uplifting ideas about how to move forward. If you are interested in delving into an intellectual discussion on academic freedom, I encourage you to read it when you have time in your busy work and personal life to do so.

I’ll close my message by returning to the final sprint ahead of you. I recognize that every end-of-term push requires additional hours and extra emotional energy to support your students while maintaining the academic standards you have set to improve outcomes and boost students’ self-belief that they are capable of achieving at high levels. Your dedication to access and excellence truly is the foundation of CSU’s academic mission and our collective success.

Thank you for choosing CSU and for all you do!

Sincerely,
Marion

Connect with the Provost & EVP: [LinkedIn – Marion Underwood](#)

Provost’s Ethics Colloquium on *The Future of Higher Education*



Dr. Jay Akridge
Purdue University



Dr. David Hummels
Purdue University

Please join us for the [Provost’s Ethics Colloquium on *The Future of Higher Education*](#) on **Tuesday, January 27, from 3-5 p.m.** in the Lory Student Center Theatre. Our keynote speakers will be Dr. Jay Akridge and Dr. David Hummels, both Purdue University economists and experienced academic leaders.

Dr. Akridge and Dr. Hummels are both brilliant, incisive, and optimistic speakers with practical suggestions for addressing the challenges we and other institutions of higher education are facing. These outstanding economists and academic leaders have a rare perspective on the value of higher education and its future, and are in a wonderful position to look at economic data to help us make the case for why our mission matters, how to adapt and improve our practices, and how we can better speak to our accountability.

Academic Leadership Updates

The search committee has identified two finalists for the role of **Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs**. The finalists will each make a presentation to the campus community in open forums on Dec. 11 and 12, respectively. Open forum details are available on the [VPFA search webpage](#), and finalist information and an opportunity to provide feedback on the finalists will be posted one business day prior to each open forum.

Searches for **Dean of the College of Business** and **Dean of the College of Natural Sciences** are also underway. Both search committees are in the process of identifying finalists, and finalist interviews for both positions are expected in late January-early February 2026. Find more information on the [COB Dean search page](#) and [CNS Dean search page](#).

CSU makes Princeton Review’s Mental Health Services Honor Roll

For the second year in a row, CSU was listed as one of only 30 institutions on [The Princeton Review’s Mental Health Services Honor Roll](#). This distinction attests to overall administrative support for campus mental health and well-being, campus quality of life for students, and the university’s empowerment of students to address their own mental health.

[CSU’s overview on the Honor Roll](#) specifically highlights the Health Network’s individual and group services and educational workshops, YOU@CSU, programs to foster belonging such as the First 50 Days events, the Center for Mindfulness’ offerings, and several peer-to-peer groups including the HDFS Peer Mentoring Program.

Call for Nominations: Provost/EVP’s Celebrate! Awards

The Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President is pleased to announce the [call for nominations for several prestigious Celebrate! Awards](#). **The submission deadline for these awards is Monday, Feb. 2, 2026.**

Nomination information, criteria, and forms are available on our [Awards Information webpage](#), as well as past recipients and contact information for the awards.

We are fortunate to have outstanding faculty and staff who are dedicated to our mission and elevating our excellence. Please consider nominating your colleagues for their exceptional contributions and achievements.

Faculty Success

EnCircle Faculty Mentoring

Faculty Success is running two EnCircle mentoring circles this fall, which include faculty from a continuing of departments across campus and various Continuing, Contract, and Adjunct and Tenure/Tenure-track ranks. The EnCircle mentoring circles focus on topics related to work-life integration and connection and community.

[Learn more about EnCircle and register for the Spring 2026 cohort](#). Registration will be open from Dec. 12 to Feb. 1, 2026.

Student Success

CSU named a Career Connected Campus

CSU has been recognized as a [Career Connected Campus](#) by the Colorado Department of Higher Education, securing the designation through 2029. Our submission was led by the Career Center and reflects CSU’s institutional commitment to student success and career readiness in academic experiences; co-curricular experiences; industry partnerships; and embedded staff in the academic colleges and the alumni association.

Announcements

- **Help proctor final exams** — The Student Disability Center is in need of volunteer final exam proctors to support nearly 2,000 students needing exam accommodations. Volunteer opportunities are available to faculty/staff and graduate students from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Dec. 15-19, and all new volunteers will receive training. Proctors are welcome to work, read, etc. during their shifts. You may [sign up to proctor final exams](#) through Dec. 12, and thank you very much! This would not be possible without support from you, our incredible community! [Email alisha.zmuda@colostate.edu for any questions.](mailto:alisha.zmuda@colostate.edu)
- **Submit a proposal for Summer Conference** — TILT [invites presentation proposals for the 2026 Summer Conference: Teaching In A Changing World](#), taking place May 20-21, 2026. Faculty, staff, and graduate teaching assistants can submit proposals through January 20. Choose from six session types and five focus areas, including Teaching with AI, Meeting Students Where They Are, Radical Hope, Slow Pedagogy, and Change Agents.
- **Writing Across the Curriculum Week Feb. 2-6, 2026** — Discover how writing can boost student engagement and learning in any discipline. This free workshop series explores practical strategies — from AI in the classroom to teaching for transfer — that faculty can apply across courses. Learn how even small writing assignments can deepen student understanding.
- **TILT's Spring Generative AI Workshop Series** — The series returns to help faculty explore AI's evolving role in teaching and learning. Join for hybrid, interactive sessions featuring TILT staff and CSU community members discussing practical strategies, sharing experiences, and navigating AI implementation together. Connect with colleagues across disciplines while building your AI teaching toolkit. See the [AI workshops, dates, and more.](#)
- **7th Annual CHHS Research Day March 10, 2026** — Register to serve as a poster judge and/or to attend the keynote, lunch, and lightning talks at the [College of Health and Human Sciences Research Day.](#)

Higher Education News

Here are a few higher education news articles recommended for your reading list:

Inside Higher Ed published an opinion column on Dec. 5, titled, "[An Unjust Suspension in Oklahoma](#)," regarding a psychology instructor placed on administrative leave after giving a student a zero on an essay in which the student cited the Bible and called the idea of multiple genders "demonic." The instructor said the essay did not answer the assignment. The story has made headlines across several other national publications, including *The New York Times* ("[College Instructor Put on Leave Over Zero Grade for Gender Essay](#)"), *The Chronicle of Higher Education* ("[The Grading Scandal that Should Worry Higher Ed](#)"), and *The Washington Post* ("[Oklahoma college student's failing grade on gender essay dropped amid outcry](#)").



Nature published an article on Nov. 26 titled, "[Trump's AI 'Genesis Mission': what are the risks and opportunities?](#)" President Trump signed an [executive order](#) in late November initiating the [Genesis Mission](#). The mission will be led by the Department of Energy and will aim to use national lab supercomputers and other resources to leverage artificial intelligence to "double the productivity and impact of American science and engineering within a decade." According to *Nature*, there are risks and benefits to the mission.

Finding Equilibrium: Two Economists on Higher Ed's Future published an article on Dec. 5 titled, "[The Human-AI Reasoning Gap: Experience and The Role of Academic Disciplines](#)." *Finding Equilibrium* is a free newsletter by Purdue economists Drs. Jay Akridge and David Hummels, and their recent post is part four of a five-part series on [AI, Labor Markets and the University](#). Akridge and Hummels write on a broad spectrum of issues facing higher ed today. Their posts are a goldmine of information — incredibly enlightening, data-driven and research-informed, and relevant to what CSU and other universities are navigating internally and externally amid a shifting, complex landscape.



Finding Equilibrium: Two Economists on Higher Ed's Future

A data-driven, research-informed weekly newsletter on the future of higher education written from the perspectives of two economists and veteran academic leaders.

Points of Pride

- **Dr. Temple Grandin**, CSU Distinguished Professor of Animal Sciences, is [honored in the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery](#) with an oil painting celebrating her transformative contributions to humane animal handling and autism advocacy. The portraits will be displayed on the first floor from Nov. 14, 2025 to Oct. 25, 2026, before entering the museum's permanent collection.
- Accounting faculty members **Dr. Liz Cowle** and **Dr. Michelle Draeger** received the American Accounting Association's [2025 Accounting Horizons Best Paper Award](#) for their study of Big Four firms' charitable giving to Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- Faculty, research scientists, and students from across the **Walter Scott, Jr. College of Engineering** received [2025-26 School of Global Environmental Sustainability awards](#). Six faculty and researchers received awards totaling \$160,000, and five Ph.D. students were named Diana Wall Sustainability Leadership Fellows. Research projects included forest and water challenges, food security, smoke monitoring, and engineering education.
- Congratulations to College of Health and Human Sciences Dean **Dr. Lise Youngblade**, newly appointed [chair of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities Board on Health and Human Sciences](#). Dr. Youngblade will host the annual BHHS conference at CSU Spur March 24-26, 2026.
- **Dr. Karrin Anderson**, professor of communication studies, received the [Distinguished Scholar Award](#) from the National Communication Association for her "lifetime of scholarly achievement in the study of human communication."
- **Dr. Dennis Ojima**, professor in the Department of Ecosystem Science and Sustainability as well as interim director and senior research scientist at the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory, was part of a notable group of global climate leaders [invited to speak alongside former U.S. Vice President Al Gore](#) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, during Gore's Climate Reality Tour.
- A [new paper published in Chem](#) from the Center for Sustainable Photoredox Catalysis (SuPRCat) describes a new sustainable way to perform important chemical transformations on medicinal compounds. SuPRCat is an NSF-funded Center for Chemical Innovation, with a team including several faculty members, graduate students and postdoc researchers from CSU's **Department of Chemistry**.
- The USDA recently announced [proposals to receive funding for the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Funding Opportunity](#). The College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences received funding for three projects (each anticipated to be in the range of \$2M over three years) lead by **Dr. Gregg Dean**, **Dr. Gilbert John**, and **Dr. Angela Bosco-Lauth**.
- The [10th annual Graduate School Showcase](#) was held on Nov. 19 with 295 presenters from all eight colleges and special academic units. Graduate students shared innovative research, creative artistry and entrepreneurial projects while competing for \$24,300 in scholarships.
- **Dr. Michael Steger**, Department of Psychology professor and Director for the Center of Meaning and Purpose, shared his expertise in a [Washington Post article about people finding meaning at work](#).

Anne Van Arsdall, Director of CSU Summer and Western Region Vice President of the [North American Association of Summer Sessions](#), received the [Carol Switzer Award for Best Use of a Stolen Idea](#) and presented on her collaborative efforts to efficiently maximize the impact of summer education at the 2025 NAASS conference. She also participated in the [Association of University Summer Sessions Annual Meeting](#), representing CSU among only 50 member institutions, such as Harvard and the University of Cambridge.

In January, Anne will again discuss maximization of summer impact in her presentation and on a panel with past AUSS and NAASS presidents at the [2026 National Conference of the Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities](#).

To learn more about CSU Summer Session and the unique opportunities it affords professors and students, consider attending Arsdall's session of the [2026 Professional Development Institute: Thriving Through Summer. Supporting Students. Empowering Faculty. Strengthening CSU.](#)

- **Dr. Ralf Sudowe**, professor in the Department of Environmental and Radiological Health Sciences, was honored with the 2025 Founders Award at the 68th Annual Radiobioassay & Radiochemical Measurements Conference. Dr. Sudowe was recognized for his outstanding leadership and scientific contributions to the detection, measurement, and analysis of radioactive materials.
- **Dr. Stephan Weiler**, professor of economics and founder of the Regional Economic Development Institute, received the [Partnership of the Year Award from the Economic Development Council of Colorado](#).
- CSU-Pueblo earned Nursing State Board approval for a collaborative **3+2 Direct Entry Nursing Program** at Fort Collins, pending nursing accreditation. [College of Health and Human Sciences pre-nursing concentrations](#) are attracting abundant CSU-Fort Collins undergraduate applicants.
- Thanks to generous support from the Scott Foundation, the **College of Engineering's new "Engineerium" student space** officially opened last week. Located in the Scott Building, the new student success space includes open seating for collaborations and individual study, along with new focus booths for quiet work and meetings.
- Highlighting the importance and impact of understanding complex global supply systems, the Management Department's **Dr. Rowan Hilend** received the [2025 Doctoral Dissertation Award](#) at the 2025 Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals Conference.
- Three graduate students from the College of Agricultural Sciences received Top Scholar Awards at the [Graduate Student Showcase](#), each earning \$500 for their outstanding research: **Natalie McCaffery** (process-based models for soil greenhouse gas inventories), **Andre Lucas Simoes Araujo** (herbicide neoprene in Kochia populations), and **Kamal Neupane** (WRKY transcription factors in rice).