Bringing the CC Community Together: Practicing CC Traditions

The Project Charge of this Committee:

Introduction

As outlined in the original strategic plan as well as in the 2018 addendum, the college aims to draw on the expertise of alumni, parents, and supporters to offer new forms of mentoring for students—find new ways to bring alumni and parents to campus and send students out into the world with new connections and skills. By having an engaged alumni and parent base, CC can provide opportunities for students to learn from outside experts and build a post-CC network. In order to move this vision forward, the college needs to build a more engaged alumni network. That engaged alumni network begins the first day a CC student steps on the campus, and unites with classmates. The community is built day after day, year after year until the students graduate and become alumni.

The charge of this block project team is to explore opportunities to augment existing traditions and create new traditions authentic to CC. The intention in creating traditions, in which students, faculty, staff, and parents can participate, is to provide opportunities to build and maintain community in which all CC stakeholders can participate. By offering unique CC traditions, from Welcome Parties to Commencement, the intended outcome of this group’s work is an engaged alumni population who have an affinity for the institution. The team has been asked to inventory and evaluate current college-centered engagement activities and programs that build CC spirit and affinity to the school. The block project team has been encouraged to research high impact practices at other colleges and universities that have successfully developed affinity programs/traditions for future alumni. The team has also surveyed students as well as recent and older alumni to learn firsthand what builds affinity at CC and what constitutes a CC tradition.

The block plan tends to disconnect students from the campus community in favor of block-centric work. We hope that by focusing on traditions in which the entire campus community can participate, we will be able to foster a sense of continuity and community throughout not only the semester, but the entire CC experience.

Process

The Committee began its work defining ‘tradition’. This posed a difficult task, and one that the group struggled to define in a CC context. We resonate with a quote in the 1964 yearbook that committee member Lily Lauer P’17, P’19, P’21 found: “a tradition at Colorado College is formed in one year... and often lasts about that long. We do not look much to how things have been done, but rather to how they can be done. The only constant at Colorado College is constant change. Our tradition is progress.”

We then split into four subcommittees with distinct tasks: gauging student sentiments about traditions, gauging faculty sentiments about traditions, gauging alumni sentiments about traditions, and researching both traditions at peer institutions as well as how those institutions publicly present those traditions. For the three subcommittees centered on surveys and gauging sentiment, the feedback was asked to address both actual and normative questions. In other words, the relevant groups were asked what current traditions they like as well as changes or completely new traditions they would like to see. The report will be structured similarly.

Student Survey

A survey was sent out to the student body, particularly targeting upperclassmen, as we felt they had the most experience with CC traditions. Prudent demographics are that 83% of respondents were
upperclassmen, 77% identified as white, and that the majority were women. Note that percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors and the option to choose ‘other’ in some questions. Respondent’s favorite extant tradition types were, in order, dances, musical events, and artistic events. Specifically, students favored Llamapalooza, Midnight Breakfast, Winter Ball, and Dance Workshop. When asked whether they deemed CC traditions as ‘welcoming,’ 57% of respondents felt they were not (versus 27% who said they were). When asked to elaborate, a consistent theme emerged: 50% of respondents who deemed the traditions unwelcoming raised concerns that they are financially exclusive. This was difficult to reconcile because the favorite traditions listed are widely free to students. We imagine that students may have been thinking of traditions other than their favorites when responding to the question about the welcoming nature of events or may be centering aspects other than financial inclusivity.

When asked what traditions they would like to see in the future, respondents wanted to see events that approached inclusiveness intentionally, traditions that involved the entire campus community, and ones based in Colorado Springs. They also wanted more dances and artistic events and those that invite the Colorado Springs community onto campus.

Of the various responses to the numerous questions asked, three takeaways:

1. Students value artistic traditions (dances, musical events, etc).
2. Students are concerned with inclusion in extant traditions, especially regarding financial accessibility.
3. Students wish to involve the Colorado Springs community in CC’s traditions.

Alumni Survey
The alumni portion surveyed 23 young alumni (Classes of 2019-2000), 20 midrange alumni (1999-1980), and 39 older alumni (1979-1953). The graph below shows how trends in traditions and student interests have shifted or remained consistent over the years. For each tradition, percentages (rounded to the nearest whole percentage) from each age category are reported as opposed to the number within each category, because there were not an equal number of alumni polled within each of the three demographics.
From the data below, we can see how student interests have shifted over time. The arts had a particularly dramatic increase in popularity, and events such as May Day, which became Llamapalooza, Winter Ball, live music, and theatre were of particular interest. While the association of sports as a CC tradition dropped for the mid-range alumni group, we saw a slight increase for young alumni, and outdoors and sports ranked second for CC traditions for the young alumni group. This indicates that outdoor engagements have increased in popularity and could be analyzed in tandem with the greater sports culture, as there are many intersections and overlaps between athletic and outdoor engagement. For full alumni survey data, see Appendix, Item 1.

**Faculty Survey**
We were unable to achieve a sufficient number of faculty responses to achieve close to a representative sample.

**Peer Institution Research**
This subcommittee created a spreadsheet detailing practices at peer institutions. This informs the website request below, as well as some of the changes to current traditions and proposals for new traditions.

**Changes/Additions to Current Traditions**
There are a couple of longstanding traditions at Colorado College that the committee sees it important to retain, however we recognize that changes can be made to make them more engaging and inclusive to all students. The committee views these yearly traditions as a great way to intentionally build upon existing events in order to foster an inclusive community, create a richer sense of Colorado College pride, and develop deeper connections to the College that will endure past graduation.

A. NSO - t-shirts, class picture, banner
   i. Introducing class (by year) t-shirts
ii. Taking class picture in the shape of the class year

iii. Having students sign their class banner with the President immediately following the class picture to be used at Commencement. Banners could be hung from rafters in Robson.

iv. Incorporate a traditions poster into NSO which lists a CC traditions checklist to be completed during the first year. The checklist will include a list of fun activities in which students can participate throughout the academic year, such as “have brunch in Rastall,” or “go to at least one athletic game,” etc.

v. Add CCSGA speaker along with other leaders from clubs and orgs to the large picnic agenda. Ask for these student representatives to welcome new students and share their favorite CC traditions or moments on campus

B. Opening Convocation

i. Use Ed Robson Arena beginning in 2022 (or fall of 2021 if possible). In an effort to include the entire community at this opening event which can now be made mandatory for all entering first-year students with the seating capacity Robson would provide.

ii. Until Ed Robson Arena is available, continue to use Shove or existing NSO tent

iii. Significantly change format in order to maintain excitement about the start of a new school year.
   a. Speaker: rather than identifying an alumna or alumnus, change the featured speaker to a professor awarded Lloyd E. Worner Teacher of the Year the previous year. Continue to honor alumni via honorary degrees, but not with speech.
   b. Limit the speech to 5-8 minutes
   c. Ask one of the Acapella groups to sing the alma mater
   d. Revise the alma mater—this time giving as a project to a selected music professor who wants to incorporate into a class. Treat more like the renaming of Prowler to maximize participation. Changing the alma mater could also be made into a contest for student bands with participation by students, alumni, the AAC, Cabinet, and Board of Trustees.
   e. Involve professors in some sort of welcome tunnel or welcome line at the conclusion of Convocation in an effort for students to experience a “rite of passage” moment to the beginning of their undergraduate years. Picture faculty and staff, cheering and offering high-fives as students leave Shove.

C. Homecoming

i. During the Fifty-Year Club Induction Luncheon, add a new tradition in which the president of the FYC gifts a bottle of champagne to the president of CCSGA for the annual champagne toast in May. The CCSGA president then gives a five-minute speech to the FYC inductees about what they are looking forward to as a senior and as a leader.

ii. Incorporate a food truck night and gathering for Robson opening that will continue each year. Something to incentivize students to attend such as swag or special and personal invitations to each student club/or org members

i. Actively pursue meaningful ways to connect students to alumni during this time.
   i. Invite a panel of young alumni back (5 years out) who can discuss different pathways post-graduation with the intention of inviting students to this event
   ii. Incorporate alumni into a TWIT student performance during Homecoming
   iii. Add a volunteer opportunity during Week of Action where students can engage with alumni in giving back to the COS community
   iv. Possible parade with students/alumni akin to the coffin races; incorporate a quick contest followed by parade down Cascade
D. Commencement (graduates with staff/faculty parents)
   i. Any faculty member or staff member who has a student graduating should be invited to the stage to present their child's diploma with the President (an effort to make the experience more meaningful to all)
   ii. Begin adding the new class banner to the stage beginning with class of 2023.
   iii. During Commencement Rehearsal, alumni director to invite a young alumni member back to campus to welcome the graduating class to the alumni community

Current traditions to keep & actively maintain
Throughout this process, we learned that there are myriad traditions that are a cherished part of the Colorado College experience. A majority of these are student-organized, and therefore maintain the ability to be responsive to the changing needs and demographics of the student body. The committee does not see the need to make any significant changes. Rather, we see it important to honor these traditions and give them more visibility by creating a website with a loose calendar and description of these yearly events. Therefore, we are asking for a homepage addition under the About tab as a tradition drop down menu on the Colorado College main website.

For a sampling of how this could be done, see a few peer institution websites such as Hamilton (About>History and Traditions) or Bowdoin (About>History and Traditions). Currently, on the CC Website, the closest we get to a Traditions page is About>Welcome to CC>Our History, but it is more focused on history than traditions. Likewise, on Campus Life>Campus Activities>Events and Programs is a list of some events, but traditions are distinct from simply campus events like Family and Friends weekend. Our request, then, is for a Traditions link under the About tab on the CC homepage. If viewing this document electronically, this link directs to a document with information for the website. This document is also in the Appendix, Item 2.

Proposals for New Traditions
In our discussions of the unique culture at Colorado College, the committee identified opportunities for new traditions that are consistent with both the College’s mission and students’ sense of identity and place. The primary goals of these proposed traditions are to create a sense of continuity throughout students’ experience on the Block Plan, and to cultivate a richer sense of shared experience and college identity and affinity. Keeping in mind: Sense of Place from the Strategic Plan

a. Alma Mater/Spirit Song
   i. Open up to student input/contest
   ii. Collaborate with music department for a possible assignment during a class or Half Block. Ryan Bañagale has been consulted on this idea and is supportive of this idea
   iii. Give student-athlete leaders the opportunity to teach the alma mater or fight song to incoming first-years and fellow athletes. Create a contest and showcase during half-time of first athletic games

b. First Peak/Last Peak
   i. Cog railway trip up Pikes Peak during first block for first years and 8th block of senior year. We recognize that individual rates are unreasonably expensive for a full class. However, we envision a potential for group rates that would increase feasibility (for example, Royal Gorge goes from $36 individual to $12 group rates for CC Block Break programming).

c. Honor Code
   i. Incorporate signing of the honor code into opening convocation

d. Alumni Reunion Brunch at Rastall’s
   i. Primarily for CO alumni all years with a fee, held during a Block Break
1. Mimosa bar
2. East Rastall

e. Senior check out at Tutt House
   i. Check out over three days by number or last name
   ii. Live music
   iii. Food trucks/Josh and Johns
   iv. Drawings based on completing tasks and for completing traditions checklist

f. Celebrate RoCCy’s birthday with a party once a year
   i. Community gathers around food and celebration, possibly for the first home game of the season
   ii. Pursue further work with the athletics leadership team to develop traditions around other sports especially during Homecoming to maximize student participation

Conclusion
While Odom’s sentiment that Colorado College’s “tradition is progress” remains relevant, there are still cultural markers, events, and other shared experiences that have stood the test of time. They connect the campus community and alumni to Colorado College and each other. This block project hopes that by modifying existing traditions, promoting those existing traditions on the College’s website, and incorporating some new proposals for traditions, we can further the role of traditions in the formation of an actively involved and engaged student and alumni community.

Respectfully submitted,
Tiffany Kelly, Alumni and Family Relations, co-chair
Ethan Greenberg ’20, CCSGA Student Body President, co-chair
Halle Taylor-Schall ’20, CCSGA Vice President of Inclusion
Lily Lauer P’17, ’19, ’21, Alumni and Family Relations
Laura Rosendo ’06, Director of Development
Amy Hill, Campus Activities and Student Orientation
Sergio Portesan ’16, The Residential Experience
David Trevithick ’17, Debate Coach (resigned from CC midway through block project)
Noble Gough, Butler Center
Jessica Bennett, Athletics
Murphy Brasuel ’96, Faculty Representative
Appendix

Item 1: Alumni Traditions Survey
The alumni engagement subcommittee partnered with the DIALogue call center, and student callers conducted phone interviews with 82 alumni from the Class of 2019 to the Class of 1953. The survey included the following questions, and alumni could provide as many answers as they pleased:

- What were your favorite CC traditions as a student?
- What CC traditions do you still partake in as an alum?
- What tradition should we be doing that we’re not already?
- Who/what brings you back to visit CC, or what would bring you back to campus?

Response analyses
We then examined trends among young alumni (Classes of 2019-2000), mid-range alumni (1999-1980), and older alumni (1979-1953) to examine trends in engagement, CC identity, and traditions over the years. Specifically, the survey included 23 young alumni, 20 midrange alumni, and 39 older alumni.

1. What were your favorite CC traditions as a student?

Please note: for each tradition, percentages (rounded to the nearest whole percentage) from each age category are reported as opposed to the number within each category, because there were not an equal number of alumni polled within each of the three demographics; there were 23 young alumni, 20 midrange alumni, and 39 older alumni interviewed. The graph below shows how trends in traditions and student interests have shifted or remained consistent over the years. Categories are presented in order of total popularity across class years.

From the data below, we can see how student interests have shifted over time. The arts had a particularly dramatic increase in popularity, and events such as May Day, which became Llamapalooza, Winter Ball, live music, and theatre were of particular interest. While the association of sports as a CC tradition dropped for the mid-range alumni group, we saw a slight increase for young alumni, and outdoors and sports ranked second for CC traditions for the young alumni group. This indicates that outdoor engagements have increased in popularity and could be analyzed in tandem with the greater sports culture, as there are many intersections and overlaps between athletic and outdoor engagement. While “academic,” “celebrations,” and “miscellaneous” categories seem to have lower popularity, it is also important to note that we could look at the content within these categories in tandem, as they include regularly-occurring campus-sponsored events that are well-attended throughout the academic year. This being said, there is also an opportunity to consider how we can engage students in cultivating a stronger CC identity and make campus-wide celebrations such as opening convocation and Homecoming more meaningful for students.
Please note:

**Team sports or athletic events:**
Respondents mentioned hockey, football, soccer, rugby, swimming, rugby, track and frisbee, ice skating, and softball

**Non-school sanctioned/social climate:**
Respondents mentioned themed parties, block breaks, campus culture, sense of community:

**Arts and Music:**
Respondents mentioned Winter Ball, Blues and shoes, Llamapalooza (formerly “May Days”), TWIT (Theatre Workshop Improv Troupe), A Capella, and theatre

**Outdoors:**
Respondents mentioned camping, skiing, Aspen Bike Trip, rafting, climbing, hiking, visiting Lake Powell and Garden of the Gods

**Academic:**
Respondents mentioned block plan, freedom and authority, Hochman, Venture Grant, opening convocation, campus-wide lectures, small class sizes

**Class-based celebrations:**
Respondents mentioned Homecoming, Homecoming parade

**Misc. traditions:**
Respondents mentioned greasing and climbing flagpole, champagne shower, Midnight Rastall, singing alma mater

2. *What CC traditions to you still partake in as an alum?*
Homecoming was identified as a key event for bringing alumni together across all ages. Hockey games were also mentioned. Several participants reported that they keep in touch with their friends on their own time. Several alumni also noted giving as a means of staying involved. Respondents also reported engaging with current students, from an art department gathering on the annual Senior New York City trip, to engaging with incoming students, to attending academic department events and symposium. The Bulletin (alumni magazine) was also mentioned.

3. What tradition should we be doing that we’re not already?

**Bringing back old traditions**
- Football
- Re-establish the Albuquerque televised hockey game
- Crashing old cars (Demolition Days)
- Classy Wednesdays

**Improve upon/continue current traditions**
- Support Greek life - destigmatize negative stereotypes and emphasize the values of community and service
- Find new ways to recognize the contributions of people from the past
- Pleased by Bulletin and books suggested by CC
- Encourage more students to take blocks abroad, as this is a natural strength of the block plan
- Renaissance culture
- Continue to build on diversity across campus
- Continue to make college more accessible for students in financial need
- Encourage student participation with alumni in community
- Make hockey games more “traditionally fun”
- Continue community concerts
- Increase alumni giving
- More banquets and food; build community around food
- Increase college career guidance

**Create new traditions**
- Honor alumni with awards during Homecoming
- Pep rallies and tailgates before sporting events
- Rename Colorado College to Palmer or Cutler College
- Motorcycle drag race

Many of these comments are in line with initiatives already in place, including Table of 8 meals, in which alumni gather to meet -- often for the first time -- around a dinner, hosted by one alumnus. Attendees local to that specific geographic area are identified by the Alumni office and invited to attend.

4. Who/what brings you back to visit CC, or what would bring you back to campus?

Respondents overwhelmingly noted Homecoming/Class reunions, to see alumni who used to perform as student musicians, family connections to the school, seeing old friends, and visiting beloved professors. Suggestions for new events included a summer reunion opportunity for alumni, a yoga retreat in Manitou Springs, a campfire ceremony. Alumni also expressed a desire for CC to reach out more, especially for classes more than 50 years out. Alumni also expressed interest in connecting with current students, especially in preparing them professionally for life after CC. (Alumni also suggested a mechanical bull and bringing back the football program.)
Item 2: Draft Website Items

Intro about campus culture and traditions

Colorado College is a distinctive and unusual place that is far from “traditional.” In the 1964 yearbook, Don Oden, student activities advisor, was quoted as saying, “a tradition at Colorado College is formed in one year and often lasts just about that long. The only constant here is change; our tradition is progress.” Despite our constant progress, there are still cultural markers, events, and other shared experiences, that have stood the test of time, connecting the campus community and alumni to Colorado College and each other.

- **Breaking Bread:** Students have a unique opportunity to make real connections and establish lasting ties with others, including faculty, staff, and students, over meals in personal homes. Have a burning philosophical question unrelated to the course? Ask your professor and classmates over coffee and bagels on her back porch. Loving the jokes your physics instructor cracks in class? Laugh with his family at their dinner table. Sit in a circle and workshop poetry on your prof's living room rug or polish off pizzas at your swim coach’s place.

- **First Mondays:** On the first Monday of each block, classes release early to allow for all members of the CC community, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators, to be part of the intellectual life of the college. First Mondays talks are designed to facilitate discourse across courses, disciplines, and divisions on key issues and topics. The year’s First Mondays begin and end with Opening Convocation and Honors Convocation.

- **The Honor Code:** The Honor System was established in 1948 to promote personal responsibility and academic integrity. Founded upon the value of mutual trust between students and professors, it is an essential tradition of the college. The Honor Code applies to all assignments completed for credit, and any potential code violation is the concern of the Honor Council. The Honor Council is the student-run organization that maintains and enforces the Honor Code through educating the campus community and administering Honor System procedures.

- **Palmer Dog:** Palmer Hall was originally built to be a state-of-the-art science building, but now it is home to the social sciences. One thing that has remained the same for over 100 years is the tradition of students rubbing the nose of Gen. William Palmer's dog on the memorial plaque in the building’s foyer as a measure of good luck before an exam.

- **Charles “Chas” Tutt Statue:** A statue of Charles Tutt, Jr. greets all visitors as they enter Tutt Library from Tava Quad. Throughout the year, you may see Chas dressed up in different costumes or outfits. Show your creativity or CC spirit by dressing him up yourself (being mindful, of course, that cultures are not a costume)!

- **America the Beautiful:** In the 1890s, Katharine Lee Bates visited Colorado Springs to teach at the Colorado Summer School of Science, Philosophy, and Languages hosted by Colorado College. Over that summer, Bates and a group of visiting faculty members boarded a prairie wagon and rode to the summit of Pikes Peak. The view, adored and admired by millions of visitors to the Pikes Peak region, struck a chord with Bates; when she returned to her room at the historic Antlers Hotel, she wrote a poem she called “Pikes Peak.” That poem later became “America the Beautiful.” You may hear this song performed at college functions and other events.

- **Athletic Rivalries and Participation:** CC supports a vibrant athletics program consisting of varsity, club, and intramural sports. While all our teams have favorite matchups, here are some of the named rivalries that take place over the year.
  - **Colorado Cup:** Women’s Soccer in-state rivalry against all six Division I women’s soccer programs.
  - **Gold Pan:** CC versus DU hockey. This long-standing rivalry against the University of Denver began during the 1993-94 season. With over 300 games played between these two teams, it is one of the top rivalries in all of college hockey.
  - **Locker Stabler Cup:** Men’s Lacrosse annual battle versus Whittier College.
Pikes Peak Trophy: CC Hockey takes on the U.S. Air Force Academy at least once a season to compete for the title of top Division I hockey team in Colorado Springs.

Exploring the Outdoors: Outdoor recreation and education have been an integral part of Colorado College’s identity since our founding in 1874. With the distinguishing combination of the Block Plan (our one-class-at-a-time academic schedule) paired with the physical location of CC, students are given the opportunity to take their educational experience and their love for the outdoors to new levels! Colorado College Outdoor Education (CCOE) runs about 200 outdoor trips a year and over three dozen workshops and trainings (ranging from Climbing Safety to Whitewater Rescue to Outdoor Leadership Trainings).

Block Breaks: There is no denying that the Block Plan, established in 1970, can be intense. So, when Wednesday at noon of fourth week rolls around and block break begins, students are excited about a well-deserved, 4.5-day break. While some students use block breaks to leave campus or to explore the Southwest, many students use them to stay on campus and rest, relax, reconnect, and rejuvenate in advance of the next block. The Block Break Planning Committee works to offer events and programs over block breaks that are low-key and local, encouraging students to be intentional with their time and more centered, grounded, and well.

Annual Events: From academic lectures to student organization meetings and late-night events, there is so much happening on campus. Below are some of CC’s favorite annual events that have serious staying power!

Class Photos: During both New Student Orientation and Commencement, classes gather to have their group picture taken.

Student Performing Arts: The performing arts are a big part of campus culture, complementing the formalized academic departments of Music and Theatre and Dance. The student performing arts initiatives below are completely student-led and driven by the interest and involvement of the student community.

- **Theatre Workshop (TW):** Located in Taylor Theatre in Bemis Hall, TW hosts student productions and shows from SpeakEasy Spoken Word to TWIT Improv and student bands to student-written or directed plays.

- **Dance Workshop (DW):** A fan favorite for over 30 years! During Blocks 4 and 7, DW puts on a three-night dance performance that features student choreographed dances made up of over 250 student dancers, ranging from first-time dancers to seasoned performers.

Midnight Breakfast: Frequently referred to as “Midnight Rasty,” this is a free opportunity for students to enjoy late-night donuts, pancakes, and tater tots after a night out with friends; these are hosted by the Office of Campus Activities about six to eight times a year.

Student Organization-Sponsored Annual Events: Student organizations are a huge part of campus life and are responsible for hosting many of CC’s favorite annual events, including some of those listed below:

- **Llamapalooza:** This annual music festival takes place every third weekend of Block 8 on Worner Quad and is free for all CC students. Featuring national musical acts as well as student bands, Llama is a glorious time to roll out blankets, relax on the lawn, and dance with friends to close out the school year.

- **Battle of the Bands:** Want a chance to perform at Llamapalooza? Student bands compete in this annual competition hosted by the Sounds of Colorado College (the SOCC) to open for national acts.

- **Exhibition Powwow:** Hosted by the Native American Student Union yearly in March or April, the annual powwow celebrates Indigenous culture and community through songs, drumming, dancing, food, and speeches from distinguished guests.

- **LoCCal Fest:** Kicking off the school year and Block 1, the annual LoCCal Fest is a great opportunity to enjoy all things local — from music to food and beverage to
art. Planned by students, funded by CCSGA, and supported by the Office of Campus Activities, LoCCal is a relatively new annual event, replacing its predecessor, Blues and Shoes, in 2018.

- **Quony Cup**: Hosted by the Student Athlete Advisory Committee each spring, this soccer tournament raises money for the American Cancer Society in memory of Chris Quon ’09 and Evan Spirito ’10, both former student athletes. Approximately 25 teams participate (including a few alumni teams) in this daylong event.
  - **Champagne Shower and Senior BBQ**: Graduating seniors mark the end of the semester and the conclusion of college by spraying some champagne around the Earle Flagpole and celebrating with friends; following the champagne shower, enjoy the Senior BBQ on the Alumni Plaza.

Want to know more about CC, campus culture, and student lingo? Check out the NSO Glossary of CC-isms. (Coming Spring 2020 to CC Bound Website).