



**BUILDING ON
ORIGINALITY**

THE CAMPAIGN FOR
COLORADO COLLEGE



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14 E. Cache La Poudre St.
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

COLORADO COLLEGE

CAMPAIGN REPORT

2022



THANKS TO YOU

The future for our young leaders, our bustling campus, and our vibrant community is brighter than ever. *Building on Originality: The Campaign for Colorado College* concluded Dec. 31, 2021, creating lasting impact for students now and in the years to come.

We have so much to celebrate, because of you.

SCHOLARSHIPS & THE CC EXPERIENCE

*145 new scholarships created to increase access to a CC education.
Expanded student internship, research, and exploration opportunities.*

CHARLES L. TUTT LIBRARY RENOVATION

Largest carbon-neutral, net-zero energy academic library in the U.S. More than doubled seat capacity to 1,100 seats. A library built for the rhythm of the Block Plan.

OPENING OF YALICH STUDENT SERVICES CENTER AND ED ROBSON ARENA

*One-stop resource offering services for student health, wellbeing, and community.
A versatile arena benefitting campus and the Colorado Springs communities.*

FOSTERING ENGAGED TEACHING AND LEARNING

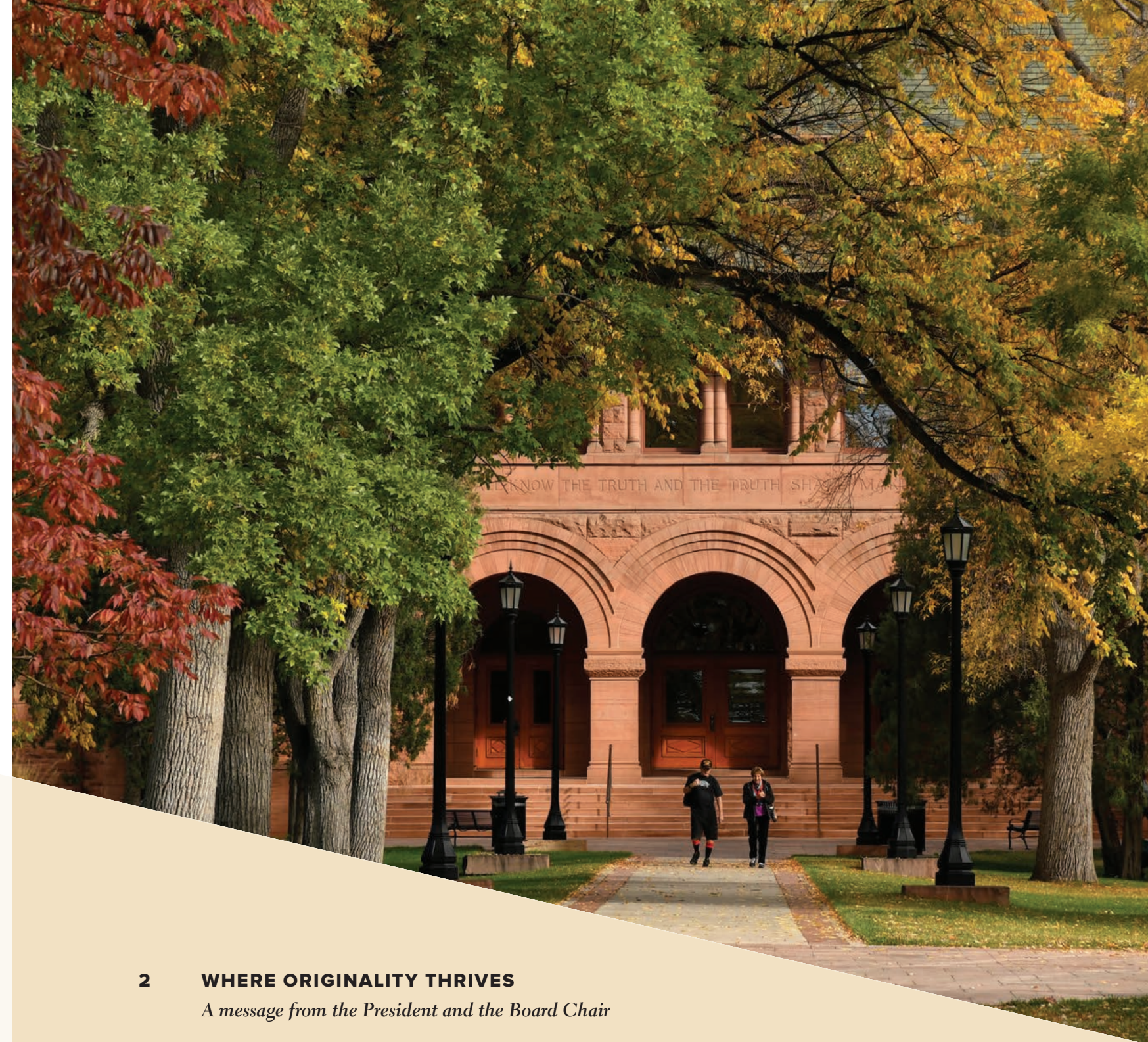
*Funding to support CC faculty as teachers and scholars.
Bringing visiting scholars, writers, artists, and entrepreneurs to campus.*

ROBUST CREATIVITY & INNOVATION AT CC PROGRAMMING

Cultivating resilience, risk-taking, and creative problem-solving. Grant funding to support student and faculty innovation projects. Established the first-ever Chair in Innovation.

... AND SO MUCH MORE.

It's never too late to make a difference for CC students.
Consider supporting Colorado College with a gift to the Annual Fund: coloradocollege.edu/give.



2 WHERE ORIGINALITY THRIVES

A message from the President and the Board Chair

4 THE STUDENT VOICE

A message from the outgoing Student Trustee and Student Body President

6 BUILDING ON ORIGINALITY: WHAT YOU'VE MADE POSSIBLE

Time for celebration as CC's fundraising campaign concludes

16 HISTORIC IMPACT: CC RECEIVES \$33.5M FUTURE GIFT

Unprecedented estate commitment will provide support for CC's future needs

18 KELLER FAMILY VENTURE GRANTS SPUR STUDENT RESEARCH

From sustainable agriculture to filmmaking and mycology, projects thrive amid pandemic challenges

20 CAMPAIGN STEERING COMMITTEE

WHERE ORIGINALITY THRIVES

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE BOARD CHAIR

DEAR FRIENDS,

As we celebrate the conclusion of *Building on Originality: The Campaign for Colorado College*, we are overwhelmed with gratitude — for the inquisitive minds that make up our current student body, for the devoted faculty and staff who inspire and shape our future leaders, and for the alumni, families, and generous donors who comprise our larger CC community. We are grateful for the more than 41,000 donors who chose to give to CC during this multi-year campaign, all of whom played a role in its astounding success. Raising \$478 million and surpassing its fundraising target by more than \$40 million, *Building on Originality* garnered unprecedented support for the students of today and tomorrow, while cementing CC's reputation as a place where originality thrives.

The strides the college made during the campaign have been remarkable. Philanthropic support raised through

Building on Originality enabled the renovation of the world-class Charles L. Tutt Library (2017) and the construction of the Ed Robson Arena (2021); inspired more than \$90 million in commitments to scholarships and the CC experience; and provided resources for students to grow and explore even beyond our campus boundaries.

During this campaign, the college also celebrated the two largest gifts in its history. In Spring 2021, we announced the largest commitment from an individual to Colorado College — a future estate gift valued at \$33.5 million. Earlier in the campaign, the alliance between the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and Colorado College culminated in the transfer of the FAC's assets, a gift valued at more than \$175 million. The FAC has made an impact for 20-plus academic programs at CC, hosted thousands of students from more than 50 classes, and strengthened our ties to the Colorado Springs community.

In October 2021, CC Men's Hockey hosted its first on-campus games in the new Ed Robson Arena. The 3,400-seat arena serves as the home for CC hockey and as a space for club and intramural sports and student life activities. As part of Colorado Springs' City for Champions initiative, it also hosts regional, national, and international community and sporting events.

The new Mike and Barbara Yalich Student Services Center, next door to Ed Robson Arena, is now a thriving space for student wellness and community. The Yalich Center serves as a hub for health and wellbeing services, the bookstore, mail center, an art studio, and space for a future restaurant. We are excited by what the combination of philanthropic support and our city partnership is making possible. Read more about the Ed Robson Arena and Yalich Student Services Center on page 12.

We are energized about the path forward. We are inspired by the adventur-

ous spirit and relentless commitment to excellence we witness each day on this campus. We are proud of this network of originals, changemakers, and creators — and we are eager to come together to ask ourselves, "How can we do what we do better?"

In the wake of the uncertainties of COVID-19, a volatile political climate, and a nationwide reckoning on racism and social justice, individuals and institutions everywhere are reassessing their traditions and priorities — asking if the way things always *have been* done is the way they always *must* be done. It's not unlike the nationwide turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s — the environment from which CC's innovative Block Plan emerged.

For these reasons, the time is right for CC to embark on a new journey with Project 2024, our strategic path forward as a college. Together as a community, we will capture that spirit of risk-taking, curiosity, and bold action that resulted in the creation of the Block Plan a little

more than 50 years ago, and we will use it to map out a brighter future.

We are innovators at heart, from our nontraditional academic structure to the way we adapted during the pandemic. With Project 2024, we will harness these qualities and confront the realities and challenges facing higher education, both now and in the decades to come. We are having visionary discussions about how we educate our students, how we can capitalize on our unique strengths, and how we can seize the opportunities available to us **to do what we do better.**

The ideas and actions we pursue through this process will be grounded in our commitment to antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are reexamining CC's approach to curriculum, student life, recognition, scholarships, policies, and more through an antiracist lens, and we are fostering conversations about what it truly means to practice antiracism as individuals and as an institution. We

remain focused on increasing access and lowering financial barriers to a CC education for promising students of all backgrounds, as well as prioritizing mental, physical, and emotional health and wellbeing for every member of our CC community.

Thank you for your generosity and commitment to CC. We are fortunate to have such passionate friends and alumni who empower us to set big goals that make a lasting difference for students — like those envisioned and brought to life through *Building on Originality*.

Sincerely,

JEFF KELLER '91, P'23
CHAIR OF THE BOARD
OF TRUSTEES



L. SONG RICHARDSON
PRESIDENT



THE STUDENT VOICE

A MESSAGE FROM CC'S OUTGOING STUDENT TRUSTEE AND STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT

As outgoing Colorado College Student Government Association (CCSGA) President and Student Trustee, we represented the student body to the college administration and Board of Trustees for the 2021-22 academic year. We were informed by our own experiences at CC and by the relationships we formed with fellow students, faculty, and staff. We proactively listened and learned from our peers across campus, especially those whose voices are less often heard where decisions are made. In turn, we provided insight to the college's leadership about how high-level strategic decisions impact the daily life of students.

In this way, we worked to create synergy between the long-term vision of the board, the leadership functions of the administration, and the boots-on-the-ground perspective of the student body.

Without this functional alignment of priorities across the CC community, the college would not be able to execute impactful projects like the *Building on Originality* campaign. We are excited to celebrate the conclusion of the campaign and the difference it's made for CC, and we extend our thanks to everyone who has been part of its success. Campaign funds have already benefited thousands of students in myriad ways and will make an even greater impact for the generations to come.

The student experience at CC is short when compared to the broader vision of the college. In fact, *Building on Originality* launched before we arrived on campus — but today's students have been able to experience the renovated Charles L. Tutt Library, the new Ed Robson Arena and Yalich Student Services Center, and a host of academ-

ic and extracurricular opportunities that reaffirm the uniqueness of a CC education.

During the campaign, students have also found their voices and chosen to participate in a culture of giving in new and creative ways. After all, at CC, we are encouraged to become change-makers and to speak up for the causes that are important to us. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, a group of students launched CC Mutual Aid as a way for the campus community to look out for one another during times of need. The fund provided critical support for students at the height of the pandemic, and today it continues to bring out the best in our community. We have the capacity to come together and create change because, at CC, we share values like respect, integrity, and social responsibility.



These values are no more evident than in CC's continued and proactive commitment to antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. It has been exciting to see the engagement not only of students, faculty, and staff, but also of alumni, families, donors, and volunteers in CC's ADEI initiatives. From joining educational opportunities to inquiring about mentorship and giving, and even through the conversations you have with individuals beyond the CC campus — every effort makes a difference. Your participation gives us confidence that

CC can be a leader in this space, providing a framework for other institutions to turn words into action. Although we know this work will continue long after our time here as students, we are proud to lend our voices to these important discussions and to help shape the path forward.

As we reflect on all that we experienced at CC and begin the next chapter of our lives as alumni, the overwhelming feeling is gratitude. We appreciate all those who have made our education

possible: our families for their support and belief, our professors for teaching us how to think like originals, the staff who bring this college to life each day, the alumni who keep the CC spirit thriving around the world, and the generous donors and volunteers who poise CC and its students for long-term success. Thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely,

DEKSYOS DAMTEW '22
2021-22 STUDENT
BODY PRESIDENT



GABY JADOTTE '22
2021-22 STUDENT
TRUSTEE



BUILDING ON ORIGINALITY

WHAT YOU'VE MADE POSSIBLE

CC's Building on Originality campaign publicly launched in 2017 with an ambitious fundraising target to advance the college's short- and long-term priorities. More than 41,000 donors came together to turn dreams into reality on the CC campus — making new facilities, experiences, and opportunities possible for students and the greater CC community. The campaign, the most successful in the college's history, officially concluded on Dec. 31, 2021.

	GOAL	TOTAL RAISED
CORE CAMPAIGN	\$260M	\$302M*
FINE ARTS CENTER GIFT	\$175M	\$176M
TOTAL	\$435M	\$478M

TOTAL DONORS: **41,140**

*Includes \$9.2M from Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority counted as anticipated funding for Ed Robson Arena.

During the campaign, the Fine Arts Center transferred to Colorado College as a gift, the largest in the college's history.



TUTT LIBRARY RENOVATION

The \$45 million renovation of the Charles L. Tutt Library, which opened its doors in 2017, was made possible in part thanks to philanthropic support totaling \$20 million. The reimaged 90,000-square-foot space is tuned to the rhythm of the Block Plan, equipping students with the tools, expert instruction, and access to information they need to support their learning in

a flexible, inviting space. The renovation increased available seating from 495 to 1,100 seats, and some areas of the library are open 24 hours a day to accommodate peak usage times on the Block Plan.

The library houses more than 425,000 physical volumes and a climate-controlled Special Collections vault,

as well as online collections supporting teaching and research at CC. It also features laboratories for geographic information systems (GIS) and data visualization, a dedicated area for technology support, classrooms, group study and reading rooms, event spaces, and the beloved Susie B's café.

The Tutt Library's Net-Zero Energy System

The renovation of the Charles L. Tutt Library created the largest carbon-neutral, net-zero energy academic library in the United States, for which it has garnered numerous awards — including the 2017 Innovation Award from the National Association of College and University Business Officers and a 2018 Gold Award in Building Design & Construction's 35th Annual Reconstruction Awards Program. The library played a major role in Colorado College's goal of reaching carbon neutrality, which it achieved in 2020.

The library's sustainable design includes:

- A geothermal energy field on Tava Quad, consisting of 80 wells, each 400 feet deep and five-and-a-half inches wide
- A 115-kilowatt rooftop solar array
- A 400-kilowatt offsite solar array
- A green rooftop garden
- A 130-kilowatt combined heat and power system



COLORADO SPRINGS FINE ARTS CENTER AT COLORADO COLLEGE

In 2016, the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center formed an alliance with Colorado College designed to enrich the student experience by bridging the gap between art and academics, while forging stronger connections between the college and the local and regional communities. As part of the alliance agreement, the FAC's assets transferred to Colorado College as a gift, representing the largest gift in the college's

history with a value of more than \$175 million. The alliance has opened new opportunities for object-based teaching, visiting artists, experiential education, and internships for students. With one of the most important collections of Southwest art in the world, the museum reaffirms CC's unique sense of place and facilitates collaboration in the visual and performing arts, history, and anthropology. Led by the guiding principles

of excellence, access, and collaboration, the FAC has put in place several initiatives to increase attendance and accessibility in recent years — including reduced admission prices, twice-monthly museum free days, discounted theater tickets for students, free K-12 school touring programs, and a "Passport to the Arts" program providing free memberships, theater ticket benefits, and art class discounts to local fourth-grade students and their families.

The FAC's Impact on the CC Community

Since 2017, the FAC has:

- Facilitated 10,875 student interactions
- Welcomed more than 50 CC classes and 20-plus academic departments
- Hosted 541 class visits
- Been utilized by 76 CC faculty members as a component of their courses
- Employed more than 60 CC students at the museum
- Held 144 museum free days for the Colorado Springs community

CREATIVITY & INNOVATION

Creativity & Innovation at CC seeks to empower all students with the creative confidence to be changemakers by integrating creative problem-solving, mindfulness, reflection, self-awareness, productive risk-taking, and collaboration into curricular and co-curricular programs. Students are equipped with the tools to bring ideas into action, even as they undoubtedly face failure along the way. C&I is based on the understanding that innovation occurs culturally, socially, and personally, rather than exclusively in

the business and tech worlds. Through the *Building on Originality* campaign, donors have provided resources that enable students across the college to approach their work with creativity and curiosity, become comfortable with risk, and practice productive failure. An early gift from CC trustee Sam Bronfman and his wife, Kelly Bronfman, P'10, P'19, the Bronfman Scholar-In-Residence brings professionals who embody creativity and innovation to campus to teach and connect with students and faculty in various settings. The inaugural residency is held by Felicia Rose Chavez, an award-winning author specializing in antiracism and decolonization.

engagements. Creativity & Innovation grants, designed to empower students and faculty to investigate ambiguous questions and solve real-world problems, have funded numerous student and faculty projects. Made possible by a gift from CC trustee Sam Bronfman and his wife, Kelly Bronfman, P'10, P'19, the Bronfman Scholar-In-Residence brings professionals who embody creativity and innovation to campus to teach and connect with students and faculty in various settings. The inaugural residency is held by Felicia Rose Chavez, an award-winning author specializing in antiracism and decolonization.

THE ANNUAL FUND

The Colorado College Annual Fund provides support for high-impact projects and areas of greatest need at CC. During the *Building on Originality* campaign, every dollar was critical to achieving the college's ambitious goals. During the

campaign, CC alumni, parents and families, faculty and staff, and friends of the college contributed more than \$25 million to the Annual Fund. Gifts of every size are impactful, and collective action makes a difference. In fact, during the campaign, all gifts of less than \$500 totaled more than \$10 million. These unrestricted gifts play a vital role in advancing

the college's mission year in and year out, while allowing the college to be nimble and respond to emerging priorities.

Though the Building on Originality campaign has concluded, CC students still need our support. It's never too late to make a difference. Consider making a gift of any size to CC's Annual Fund: coloradocollege.edu/give.



SCHOLARSHIPS

AND THE CC EXPERIENCE

The Colorado College experience benefits all students when we open the college's doors to those who possess the talent, curiosity, and drive to be changemakers. Scholarship support and resources to make CC more accessible have been central to Building on Originality because financial resources should not be a barrier to the CC experience.

During the campaign, donors contributed more than \$90 million in outright gifts, pledges, and bequest intentions for scholarships and the CC experience, creating 145 new endowed and current-use scholarships in the process as well as supporting internships, student research, and experiential learning opportunities. Increasing resources for scholarships and other opportunities made possible on the Block Plan helps the college admit promising students, regardless of their ability to pay, and opens doors to all that CC has to offer.



CHALLENGES LEAD TO UNPRECEDENTED SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT

Alumni-led matching challenges fuel giving to endowed scholarships during the Building on Originality campaign.

For Susan S. Burghart '77 and the late William S. Smith '74, personal philanthropy is meaningful — but creating a wave of giving across the community is what matters most.

Burghart launched Susie B's Challenge in 2018, when she was Chair of the Colorado College Board of Trustees. Through the effort, she matched all gifts of \$50,000 or more to the Colorado Pledge, an access program to fund endowed scholarships for lower- and middle-income students from Colorado. The initiative ensures a Colorado College education is as affordable for Colorado residents as the state's flagship institution.

Susie B's Challenge successfully concluded in the fall of 2020, with \$5 million raised for the Colorado Pledge — including Burghart's initial \$2.5 million commitment and \$2.5 million in donor commitments. Funds raised for the Colorado Pledge will be used to assist CC students in perpetuity.

Students entering CC in Fall 2020 were the first to benefit from the Colorado Pledge, which was designed to support Colorado students from families whose adjusted gross income is \$200,000 or below. In August 2021, the threshold was adjusted to \$250,000. To learn more about the Colorado Pledge, visit coloradocollege.edu/coloradoplege.

Smith, who passed away in April 2021, also created transformational impact through multiple matching challenges for endowed scholarships. In 2015, he pledged a generous estate gift that would encourage others to support scholarships for CC students. In what was dubbed the "Endowed Scholarship Challenge 101," Smith urged 100 other donors, mostly CC alumni, to commit \$100,000 or more toward endowed scholarships. In turn, he would direct \$100,000 through his estate, up to \$10 million.

At the outset, his hope was to raise a total of \$20 million. In fact, the challenge resonated so strongly with the 100 donors

who participated that more than \$43 million was generated for CC scholarships by January 2020. Given the success of the initial challenge, Smith doubled down in Spring 2020. He pledged an additional \$5 million to match gifts of \$50,000 or more for scholarships with \$50,000.

Funds raised throughout the challenge are invested in the college's endowment, ensuring that future students will benefit in perpetuity.

As of spring 2022, donors have responded to Smith's \$5 million commitment by giving \$2.65 million toward student financial aid and scholarships. That generosity has resulted in the creation or enhancement of 48 endowed scholarships.

To learn more about supporting scholarships and the CC experience, contact Preston Briggs at pbriggs@coloradocollege.edu or (719) 389-6785.





A HOME FOR TIGER PRIDE

CC AND THE COLORADO SPRINGS COMMUNITY CELEBRATE OPENING OF ED ROBSON ARENA AND YALICH STUDENT SERVICES CENTER

A home arena for Tiger hockey. A hub for student life on the Colorado College campus. A converging point for student health and wellbeing resources. A sporting and event venue for the Colorado Springs community.

The new Ed Robson Arena and adjacent Mike and Barbara Yalich Student Services Center opened their doors in September 2021 and have been buzzing with activity ever since — welcoming current students, community members, and hockey fans throughout the year.

The arena is named for Ed Robson '54, a former Tigers hockey player who provided the lead gift for the facility. With a gift from Inasmuch Foundation, the student services center honors the legacy of Barbara Neeley Yalich '53, a longtime CC advocate who has devoted her life to public service, and her late husband, Milo "Mike" Yalich '50, who captained the 1949-50 Tigers to the school's first NCAA national title.

The complex at the corner of East Cache La Poudre and Tejon streets is also part of Colorado Springs' City for Champions (C4C) initiative, which uses revenue made available by the state's 2013 Regional Tourism Act as seed money to invest in new facilities to draw tourists to the region.

Construction on the versatile Ed Robson Arena and Yalich Student Services Center broke ground in February 2020. It includes meeting and event spaces and a scenic outdoor plaza — ideal for hosting art and music events and student life activities. The Yalich center serves as the new hub for student health and wellbeing services, the college bookstore and mail center, as well as an art studio and restaurant space.

"Our students are incredibly excited to have a state-of-the-art hockey arena that can also serve all of campus," said Rochelle T. Dickey, dean of students and vice president for Student Life. "The really innovative piece was combining

an ice arena and event space with our health and wellbeing services in the same building. This is a premier destination."

"Our ability to better serve the students has been transformed," said Lesley Irvine, CC vice president and director of athletics. "This is a true multipurpose facility that will benefit the entire campus and Colorado Springs communities as a whole."

Construction of the Ed Robson Arena was made possible by Robson's lead gift, C4C funding, and other donations. The facility serves as the first on-campus home for CC's NCAA Division I men's hockey program.

Now able to practice and compete on-campus rather than across town, student-athletes are realizing increased time and efficiency. The arena's location in the heart of downtown Colorado Springs is helping build buzz on game days and driving attendance from students and local fans.



Equipped with a state-of-the-art practice and game space, CC Athletics said the facility will benefit recruiting efforts and elevate the Tigers' competitiveness in the National Collegiate Hockey Conference, while at the same time better serve the entire campus community.

The arena is already a busy venue that promises to attract state and regional visitors as C4C intended. Its efficient layout, with two suites and a spacious concourse, allows for big and small events ranging from board meetings to Olympic sport training camps, from club and adult league hockey games to high school and college graduations — including CC's 2022 Commencement ceremony.

The adjacent Yalich center honors Mike and Barbara Yalich, both devoted Tiger fans and longtime CC supporters. Barbara Yalich served as the first executive director of the Health Association of Pikes Peak Region and executive director of the El Paso County Mental Health Association. She returned to CC at several points throughout her career, ultimately serving as vice president for development and college relations until retiring in 1994.

Mike is remembered as a teammate, coach, community leader, and veteran. He served in the United States Navy and was part of numerous World War II campaigns in the South Pacific. In addition to captaining the Tiger

Hockey Team to its first NCAA title in 1950, Mike played football and baseball at CC, and was inducted into the Colorado College Sports Hall of Fame and the Colorado Springs Sports Hall of Fame.

The new student services space puts the medical facility, formerly in the Boettcher Center, across the hall from counseling offices, sexual assault response, and other wellness resources. By bringing these services together under one roof, the college is building a more cohesive continuum of care and taking a preventative, rather than reactive, approach.

"What we are really trying to do with Health & Wellbeing is to build an integrated health care system for our students where it doesn't feel they are being sent to one place or to another place, but that we all work together," said Heather L. Horton, senior director of Student Health & Wellbeing. She gave the example of a healthcare worker walking a student over to a mental health provider or resources after ruling out medical issues, saying the proximity "removes barriers and improves cooperation between the services."

The modern building design allows for plenty of natural light, creating more welcoming spaces for students to use on their own or as part of a scheduled program.

"The students love being able to come in and journal, sit, relax, and look at the mountains," Dickey said. "It is a beautiful space."

Ed Robson Arena is the final C4C venue to open after the Air Force Academy Visitors Center, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Museum, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs William J. Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center, and Weidner Field, home of the Switchbacks pro soccer franchise.

That cooperation between private and public organizations led to a historic ribbon cutting for the facility on Sept. 18, 2021, which honored both Robson's generosity and leadership as well as the Yalichs' impact on the CC community.

"I have been lucky and worked with some great people for a long time," Robson said. "This school and (former NCAA championship coach) Cheddy Thompson put me on the right path."

The 2021-22 Tiger hockey season marked the first in the new 3,407-seat arena. The final home game of the season against the University of Denver saw record attendance from students, faculty and staff, donors and friends of the college, and the Colorado Springs community.



HISTORIC IMPACT

CC RECEIVES \$33.5M FUTURE GIFT

In the spring of 2021, Colorado College announced a \$33.5 million future estate gift from an anonymous donor — the largest gift ever from an individual in the college's 148-year history. The unprecedented estate commitment will support the college's future needs and provide funding for the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College.

"This extraordinary commitment will enrich the liberal arts education of thousands of CC students in the years ahead," said L. Song Richardson, 14th president of Colorado College. "We are grateful for this opportunity to advance our priorities as a college, while increasing access to a CC education for promising students regardless of cost. I am moved by the fact that this donor's positive experiences and confidence in the college's future have inspired such a transformational gift."

"This anonymous gift is absolutely incredible in what it does to demonstrate the degree to which this school, this program, this place, this 'what we do' here

at Colorado College is something that warrants that kind of investment," said Jeff Keller '91, P'23, chair of the Board of Trustees and co-chair of the campaign. "I think it's really exciting to think about where we now go from here — because in a sense, the bar has been reset. We can all look for opportunities at our own levels to contribute in ways that stretch us, because it's worth it."

The donor wanted to make a lasting impact, one that will enable CC to continue attracting bright minds and building the leaders of tomorrow.

"Colorado College has given so much to me, and it brings me great joy to see how CC positively changes the lives of students," the donor said. "Every year I see curious, creative, critical thinkers expand their world, find their passion, and apply the knowledge and courage they gain at CC under the guidance of fantastic faculty and staff. That translates to exciting progress ahead for our world: This is where our next leaders are inspired. My wish is to keep that

brilliance and spark bright for future generations."

The donor made the commitment in part to inspire other members of the CC community to make gifts of their own, saying the dollar amount is much less important than the act of giving.

"My first gift to Colorado College was \$25. I've seen the promise that students bring, and that CC fosters. I encourage others to give back at all gift levels, because supporting this great place is a way to have impact far beyond the college's boundaries, and far beyond this time."



KELLER FAMILY VENTURE GRANTS SPUR STUDENT RESEARCH

FROM SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE TO FILMMAKING AND MYCOLOGY, PROJECTS THRIVE AMID PANDEMIC CHALLENGES



Julieta Lechini '22 knows the pride and satisfaction that comes from growing one's own food and sharing it with the local community — a skill she learned firsthand in her home city of Montevideo, Uruguay, and then honed by researching urban agriculture in Cuba. Both experiences were made possible through Keller Family Venture Grants, an innovative research program that became permanently endowed through donor support during CC's *Building on Originality* campaign.

Since 2005, the Keller Family Venture Grant Program has enabled more than 1,000 Colorado College students to conduct original individual research under the guidance of a faculty member or conduct collaborative research with faculty during the summer. Established by Dennis and Connie Keller P'91 and P'95, Jeff '91 and Molly Keller P'23, and David '95 and Avery Keller, the program provides up to \$1,000 per project, and students can also apply for up to \$500 in matching funds if they secure additional resources on their own. Jeff Keller chairs CC's Board of Trustees.

Although many recent Keller Venture Grant projects have been impacted by

COVID-19, it hasn't stopped determined Colorado College students from finding ways to conduct research in China, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Norway, the U.S., and more.

Lechini's project, "Starting from the Self: Bringing Autonomous and Sustainable Food Production Home," was the anthropology major's second Keller Family Venture Grant project. Because of COVID, she was home in Uruguay.

"I decided to do my own organic farm at my house. My family and I built a greenhouse on the roof. I live in the capital city, so you don't have many people having greenhouses on the top of their houses. So, people got really excited and came to help. When something grew, they wanted to try it," Lechini says.

Her purpose was to learn to be more autonomous and sustainable and to connect with food differently. She began in winter, which made growing things difficult. At one point, she says, "Everything was dying, so I needed to learn what each plant needed. It was a learning process."

Her grandfather, who had learned to farm in Cuba, passed along his expertise. Her family united and worked together. Then, as warmer weather arrived, her plants thrived.

As a first-year student in 2019, Lechini undertook her first Keller Venture Grant project, titled "Organoponicos in Cuba: Researching the Energy Efficiency and Sustainability of Organoponicos." The research focused on urban community-based farms the Cuban government sponsored starting in the 1990s during the economic depression known as the "special period," when its citizens were facing acute food shortages.

She spent nearly two months on the project, primarily in Camagüey, Cuba, affording Lechini valuable experience in research, fieldwork, and building community connections.

"That project shaped my interest in migration, particularly in Cuban migration," she says.

Earlier this year, Lechini garnered a third Keller Family Venture Grant to study Cuban migration in Montevideo, a topic that tied closely to her senior

thesis. She graduated in Spring 2022 and plans to continue her study of anthropology in graduate school after a gap year.

Patil Khakhamian '22 received a grant to research the post-production phase of film production in Armenia. Titled "Exploring Post-Production in Filmmaking," her project equipped her with the skills to create a visually appealing finished video using post-production methods, such as editing, sound design, visual effects, and color grading.

Khakhamian majored in both anthropology and film and media studies. She says the research enhanced her post-production skills in visual storytelling to make social topics and academic knowledge accessible to a wider audience, which is what she strives to do in anthropology, as well as film and media studies.

"I think visual storytelling brings people of different backgrounds and contexts closer and is more effective in raising awareness because of a closer connection the viewers feel to the subject. Us-

ing the post-production skills I learned, I was able to create visually engaging content that raised awareness of the amazing work a local nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Armenia, All for Armenia, is doing," she says.

For Alex Jennings '22, who majored in environmental science, the Keller Family Venture Grant helped him gain experience in mycology as a form of food production and bioremediation.

His project, "Radical Mycology and Communication," focused on using fungal-based solutions and cultivation to tackle urban biowaste and food production. He says the project gave him a unique opportunity to delve more deeply into mycology.

"Many fungi are decomposers, yet to my surprise, they remain heavily underused in waste management," Jennings says. "These fungi act like chemists, producing and releasing compounds that allow them to break down carbon-based materials. This allows them to digest

waste, transforming it into safe, bioavailable products while producing delicious gourmet mushrooms. It seems as if they are capable of nothing short of alchemy."

Given the virtual nature of the Keller Venture Grant program during COVID, Jennings decided to register for an online mycology school founded by Peter McCoy, a mycoremediation expert and co-founder of Radical Mycology, a grassroots organization.

"There are very few opportunities to learn about mycology in college," Jennings says. "This Venture Grant has given me the chance to explore some of this little-known and wonder-filled field. I hope to learn more about how fungi can be used in urban settings as a source of sustainable food as well as waste management."

To learn more about the Keller Family Venture Grants, visit www.coloradocollege.edu/venturegrants.

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