

## **CU and You**

### **How to get the most from your time here at CU**

**BY G.P. "BUD" PETERSON**

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Last week was, if anything, an atypical start to the academic year. On Monday, one of our new students was assaulted and stabbed coming out of the UMC in a random attack; on Wednesday, we lost power in some of the residence halls and part of the central campus; and on Saturday, the football team played CSU in the annual Rocky Mountain Showdown, all of this as nearly 5,600 new freshmen from all over the world settled into their first week of classes. Today, the student is well and has returned to class, the power has been restored, the volleyball team upset nationally ranked Cal and the football team posted a come from behind victory in one of the most exciting games in recent memory.

This is the nature of our university community: good times and bad times, planned events alongside random occurrences, pleasant and unpleasant surprises, big victories and small setbacks. Just prior to my arrival last July as Chancellor, I read a Colorado Daily editorial entitled "*Hey Bud, Let's Party.*" It listed the top ten things I should undertake as Chancellor. Although I was somewhat taken aback by the title, the piece had nothing to do with partying. What I found in the Daily's ten priorities were eight things that I myself had already identified, and two that I should have.

At the Freshman Convocation last week, I challenged the incoming freshmen to think about what it really means to be a student at CU. What is it that you wish to accomplish during your four short years here? How will you use the many opportunities available to you to grow, to stretch, and to shape your own personal future? I thought for my first "CU and You" column for the 2007-08 academic year, I would give you my thoughts on the ten things you should do to get the most from your CU experience. These are my suggestions and while I have ordered them here, the order will vary for each one of you, but the list, taken as a whole is intended to help you chart your course for the future.

**10. Be thoughtful.** You can find this phrase on buttons in our Office of Student Affairs, but it is more than just a slogan. The biggest personal challenge many of you will face is to give up the tendency to act upon emotion and quick impulses of the moment, and replace them with deliberate thought and careful action in all you do. This means thinking before you speak or act. It means being considerate of others – their experiences and views. It means extending yourself; not simply finding what is good for you personally, but what is good for your fellow students and for the greater campus community. Many violent confrontations and personal divisions could be healed if people elevated thoughtfulness alongside passion and provocation, as a way to engage one another, and considerable progress could be made in a host of areas if people would replace their assumptions with facts. A mature, educated mind can do this – the kind of mind we want you to develop here at CU.

**9. Be a good neighbor.** This goes hand in hand with number ten. Whether in the residence halls, on the Hill or elsewhere, make an effort to be a good neighbor and you will find a rewarding experience for yourself and an improved community. Respect the rights of those with whom you live and work by controlling noise levels, trash and other distractions. Remember that your neighbors may not be interested in your party, they might have children who need sleep and may have a long week ahead. Keep your music to yourself – in the age of iPods, that is easier than ever to do. Observe parking rules and city ordinances at all times, and recognize the rights of others as being equal to your own.

**8. Balance your commitments.** A key part of being in college is the learning that takes place outside of the classroom that complements and bolsters what goes on inside. Whether for you this takes the form of a commitment to the environment, to political action of one kind or another, to social justice issues, religious pursuits, community volunteerism or student government, make sure that you balance that work

with your classroom commitments. It is easy to find oneself so absorbed in transforming the world that the important work of transforming the self – the body, the mind, the spirit – falls by the wayside. Try not to let this happen: we need you in both places, functioning at a high level, for our mutual successes to be assured. This applies, of course, to socializing as well: avoid the temptation to go over the edge of reason and lose yourself in overindulgence in anything. You do not need to rush toward the edge of safety to find a good time; good times can be had without danger, excess or dependency. Be careful and moderate in all you do and you will emerge from your time here appreciative of the best things in life, not a prisoner to your appetites.

**7. Ask for help.** Whether it is directions to a campus locale or assistance with personal problems, do not think you can navigate all of CU's many avenues and corridors without asking for help. We have many resources for you here at CU – resident advisors, academic advisors, counselors and of course, faculty, staff and your fellow students – all of whom are here for you at any time. It takes a strong individual to seek help (and, as my wife Val often reminds me, a confident man to ask for directions), so do not view asking for help as a sign of weakness. Rather, it is a sign of your fitness to be here, pursuing your future, and of your maturity and focus in doing so. Also, stay connected to your family and friends. Visit them as often as you can, and invite them to Boulder to be a part of what you are experiencing here.

**6. Engage our faculty.** CU's top scholars are here for you, but in a way you are here for them, too. Faculty derive great satisfaction from your successes and grow in their ability by interacting with you on a number of levels. The best discussions do not just occur in the classroom or seminar or lecture hall, they can be found in faculty offices, in the UMC over coffee or in the laboratory. Learning opportunities are many, but at each point, faculty are a key ingredient to making them happen. I urge you to develop strong and lasting attachments to our faculty in your academic work, and to reap the benefits and rewards of their mentorship.

**5. Step outside yourself.** The purpose of a university education is self-transformation, not to confirm what you already know or believe, about the world and yourself. Take courses in subjects you have always wanted to study. Pursue your dreams and those things that give your mind pleasure, that fill you with wonder and excitement. Do not focus merely on what will prepare you for the workplace, but rather prepare yourself to enter a workplace that you may not recognize today by stepping outside yourself to learn things that you may not even know exist, in fields and areas that you have never explored. Here at CU we are trying to prepare you for jobs that do not yet exist, using technologies and approaches that have not yet been invented, to solve problems that we do not even know are problems yet. Do your part to prepare for the unknown.

**4. Embrace diversity.** Make it a point to get to know people who do not share your social, political and religious beliefs; investigate ideas that are contrary to your own so that you can more fully realize why it is that you believe what you believe. Do not seek to marginalize those who differ from you; rather, find out what makes them who they are and recognize that they, too, are on a journey of self-discovery that may take them far afield from who they are today. We define diversity here at CU as ethnic, gender/sexual, socio-economic/geographic, and intellectual diversity. Each of these qualities and the differences between them enriches our campus and the quality of the educational experience available to you here. To the extent that you embrace them, you will find your experience at CU richer and richer. The world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require that you understand and communicate with the people of the world, that you be good global citizens. Begin that process now and you and the world will benefit.

**3. Be safe.** The random attack on your fellow CU student represents an atypical moment of violence that can strike anywhere, including here on our campus. Far more common, unfortunately, are acts of self-destruction and moments of poor decision-making that can lead to catastrophe. Whether on a mountain or at a party, the first and best thing you can do to stay safe while at CU is to develop a strong personal

awareness of, and commitment to, personal safety that infuses your social and academic life. Be aware of what is going on around you and watch out for others. Do not let petty confrontations escalate into violence for any reason. Be aware of strangers in your living environment - your residence hall or off-campus apartment. Sign up for the free RAVE cellular messaging system by visiting your CUlink Web portal. Do not be reckless or careless when enjoying the recreation Boulder and Colorado have to offer – plan and observe outdoor safety protocols, and do not get in a hurry. By doing these and a host of other small things, you can ensure that you and your friends get the most out of CU and Boulder’s wonderful amenities without jeopardizing your safety or your future.

**2. Maintain your personal integrity.** We live in an age of shortcuts. I urge you not to take them, but to guard your personal integrity above all else. The rewards you will find here in your academic pursuits will be large indeed, but only as large as the efforts you make toward them. It is a difficult lesson to absorb in our age of instant gratification, but the rewards of higher education are not found in last-minute improvisations, downloads or cheat sheets. You will find them by staying true to the processes of research, inquiry and the creation of original academic work. You will find them by reading original source materials, not Cliffs Notes, Sparknotes or other summaries. Your writing will grow in strength and power with each draft you write and as it grows, your mind will sharpen and strengthen as its analytical, expressive and critical thinking skills expand. “Old school” is not just a movie and a phrase – by being true to the CU Honor Code, to the Colorado Creed and to your own sense of honor, your achievements here will prepare you to address a complex world that will change drastically, perhaps even by the time you leave here.

**1. Challenge yourself in the classroom.** This, in the end, is why you are here: to sharpen your mind and spirit together into a tool of lifetime transformation. Do not take an easy road here – take on the most difficult classes, those that really stretch your talents and abilities. Rise to the occasions presented to you. See what you are made of. Remember the lessons that brought you here: You got better at sports, school, art and music by practicing, by hard work. You will get better at learning by studying. You will get better at creating by researching. You will become a better writer by reading. So do all of these things. Hurl yourself into them and take them seriously – more seriously than anything you do. A college education at a major American public university such as the University of Colorado at Boulder is a privilege, but it is also a great good that will transform you, our community, the nation and the world. With our world changing more rapidly than ever before, your transformation is more vital than ever. Let it begin now.

Have a great year, with my best wishes for your safety and success in all things.

***G.P. “Bud” Peterson is the chancellor of the University of Colorado at Boulder. “CU and You” appears the first Wednesday of each month in the Colorado Daily, and serves as a dialogue between CU’s administrative leadership and the Colorado Daily’s student readers. The views expressed are those of the respective authors, and not necessarily those of the Colorado Daily management or staff.***