



Center for Leadership  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024-2025

**THE ROAD TO  
LEADERSHIP  
STARTS **HERE.****

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## Letter From the Director

Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

Welcome to the University of Colorado Boulder’s Center for Leadership. It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I share with you our strategic framework for cultivating ethical, innovative, and inclusive leadership on a university-wide scale.

Leadership is no longer reserved for a select few. In an era marked by global uncertainty and societal transformation, the need for principled, collaborative leaders has never been more urgent. At CU Boulder, we believe that leadership resides in everyone—and it is our responsibility as educators to help students uncover and develop their unique leadership potential.

The PEAK model—Pathways, Education, Affiliates, and Knowledge—serves as our compass. It represents a dynamic and integrative approach to leadership education, rooted in evidence-based practice and informed by decades of research. Through PEAK, we ensure that every student, regardless of background or discipline, has access to high-quality leadership development opportunities.

Our mission is brought to life by over 40 affiliate programs across campus, by the tireless work of faculty and staff, and by our incredible students who inspire us daily with their courage, vision, and drive to make a difference. Together, we are building a university culture where leadership is not defined by position, but by purpose—and where every Buff leaves Boulder ready to lead.

This strategy document captures not only what we do, but why it matters. I invite you to explore the pages that follow, to learn more about our model, our offerings, and our impact. Whether you are a student, educator, researcher, or partner in the community, we welcome your collaboration in shaping the future of leadership.

Dr. Stefanie K. Johnson  
Director, CU Boulder Center for Leadership  
Professor, Leeds School of Business





# WHO WE ARE



## OUR VISION

A world where leaders of character meet the needs of humanity.



## OUR MISSION

To invest in the leadership potential of all students and elevate leadership education at the University of Colorado Boulder through collaboration with internal and external communities.



## OUR HISTORY

The Center for Leadership was founded in fall 2020 under the direction of Chancellor Philip P. DiStefano. We serve as a multidisciplinary hub to support, connect, and elevate leadership across the university.



## OUR VALUES & PRINCIPLES

- Excellence
- Respect for Others
- Honesty & Integrity
- Commitment
- Open Mindedness

The CFL helps Buffs reach their leadership PEAK through:

- > PATHWAYS for students to start their leadership journey
- > EDUCATION (curricular and co-curricular) offered by CFL
- > AFFILIATE support for other campus leadership programs
- > KNOWLEDGE generated through research to fuel programs

# WHAT WE DO

# THE PEOPLE AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL

## CFL Staff

**Phil DiStefano** | Senior Executive Director, Professor of Education

**Stefanie Johnson** | Director & Professor, Organizational Leadership and Information Analytics

**Seth Webb** | Director of Experiential Education

**Jessi Follett** | Assistant Director

**Kathryn DesCombes** | Leadership Development & Community Engagement Coordinator

**Chau McAusland** | Office Manager

## Executive Committee

**Scott Battle** | Division of Continuing Education & Professional Studies

**David Callan** | Scripps Leadership & Career Development

**Emily Cosnett** | Outdoor Programs

**Ronald Duren Jr.** | Engineering Management Program

**Walt Morgan** | Leadership Instructor & Coach

**Kira Pasquesi** | Leadership Studies Minor

**Corinna Rohse** | Student Academic Success Center

**Angela Thieman Dino** | Engineering Leadership Program

**Jessie Kasynski** | Presidents Leadership Class

**Hannah Wood** | Conference on World Affairs





# BOARD OF ADVISORS



**Katie Kramer** | Chair  
President & CEO, Boettcher  
Foundation



**Martha Piper** | Vice Chair  
Senior Advisor at World  
Wildlife Fund



**Bob Yates** | Secretary  
Interim Executive Director,  
Museum of Boulder



**Ewa Borowska**  
Executive Director at Peak  
to Peak Leadership



**Steve Bosley**  
Co-Founder, BOLDERBoulder  
Regent Emeritus



**Sandy Bracken**  
University of Colorado  
President - Retired



**Jan Burton**  
Retired Business Executive,  
Community Volunteer



**Hassan El Houry**  
Chair of the Board of  
Menzies Aviation



**Charles Gilford III**  
CEO at Inner City Health



**Jane Holzman**  
Information Technology at  
IBM - Retired



**Amy Humble**  
President of Disruption Advisors  
& CEO of White River Strategy



**Rick Lawrence**  
Senior Managing Director, Mountain  
West, for Lido Advisors, LLC



**Sunni Markowitz**  
Empowerment Coach



**Keith Miller**  
Chief Executive Officer at AMO  
Worldwide Inc



**Matthew Moseley**  
President of Ignition Strategy  
Group and author



**Dr. Vinay Nair**  
Founder and CEO of  
TIFIN



**Pat Nash**  
Partner in the Restructuring  
Group of Kirkland & Ellis LLP



**Christy Orris**  
Co-Founder, Peak to Peak  
Leadership



**Gordon Riggle | Chair**  
Consultant in Leadership, Strategy,  
and Government Relations



**Alan Rogers**  
Maj. General USAF - Retired



**Jenny Simpson**  
Professional Track and Field  
Athlete



**Shannon Sisler**  
Executive Vice President,  
Chief People Officer of Crocs



**Jeannie Thompson**  
Former Chair of the Board,  
CU Foundation



**Emily Walsh**  
Leadership Development  
Program Manager at Magnite

## CFL BY THE NUMBERS

**12,000+**

students served through our leadership affiliates

**1,800**

at the Conference on World Affairs keynote sponsored in part by  
the Center for Leadership

**200+**

professionals attended leadership conferences at CU Boulder

**194**

participants in the Boulder-CU Leadership Program

**71**

student participants, and

**22**

coaches in the Coaching Program

**40**

total affiliate leadership programs

**25**

participants in the Experiential Leadership Intensives

**10**

participants in the inaugural River Conservation Leadership Intensive

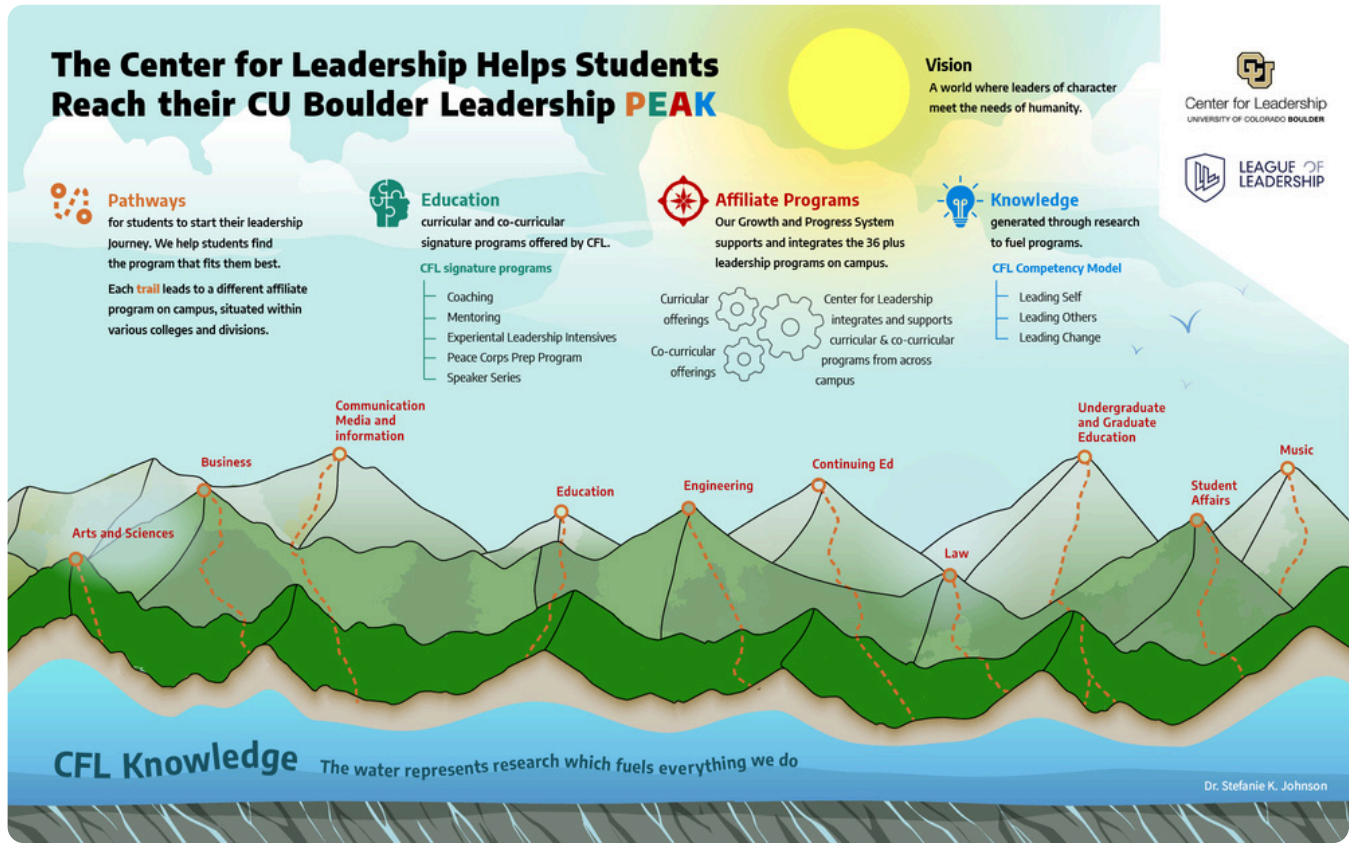
**9**

students pursuing the Peace Corps Prep Certificate



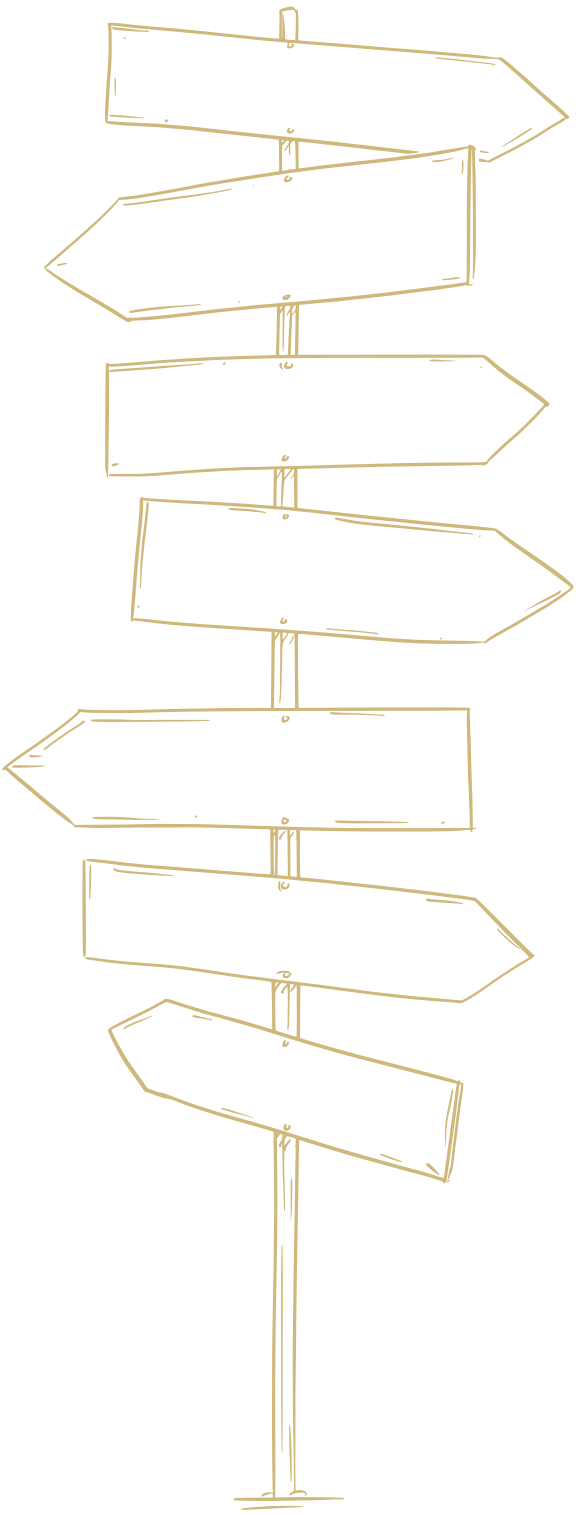
# OUR MODEL

The **PEAK** model (Pathways, Education, Affiliates, Knowledge) is the Center for Leadership at CU Boulder’s strategy for creating **collective impact** through **leadership education**. The model emphasizes structured access to leadership opportunities, interdisciplinary academic learning, campus-wide collaboration, and evidence-based program design.



Our **leadership development model**, which guides all of our leadership development efforts, is a modified version of the Komives model, creating the **Leadership Buff Development Model** with four stages: **Learn, Observe, Practice, and Feedback**.

Our leadership programs are designed to develop **key competencies** that are essential for effective leadership:  
**Leading Self:** Character, career, self-development, and resilience  
**Leading Others:** Teamwork, communication, and inclusion  
**Leading Change:** Critical thinking, innovation and social change, and civic engagement



# PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP

At the Center for Leadership, we believe that **leadership is within every CU Buff**. And although leadership is distributed equally, access is not. Therefore, we strive to find Buff Diamonds in the Rough, who have not raised their hands for leadership yet.

- We accomplish this through:
- Extensive **outreach** efforts
  - Engaging leadership **speakers**
  - Our **Boulder-CU Leadership Program**

Next year, we are thrilled to introduce our new **Emerging Leaders Academy**. This program is CU Boulder’s campus-wide initiative designed to transform curiosity about leadership into tangible skills and résumé-ready badges.



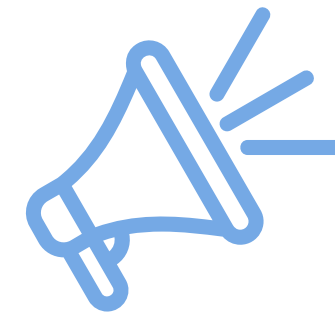


In May 2025, the Center for Leadership was honored to host award-winning actress, singer, and producer **Cynthia Erivo** as a keynote speaker during CU Boulder's Conference on World Affairs. Erivo captivated the audience with a powerful message about identity, resilience, and leading with authenticity, inspiring students to embrace their unique voices. Her visit underscored the transformative potential of storytelling and personal leadership. The event was followed by a special session with entrepreneur **David Adelman**, who shared insights on innovation and seizing opportunity with the mantra, "Why not me, why not now?"



## PATHWAYS

### Student Outreach



This year, we have broadened our Pathways initiatives by engaging with students across campus through the following activities:

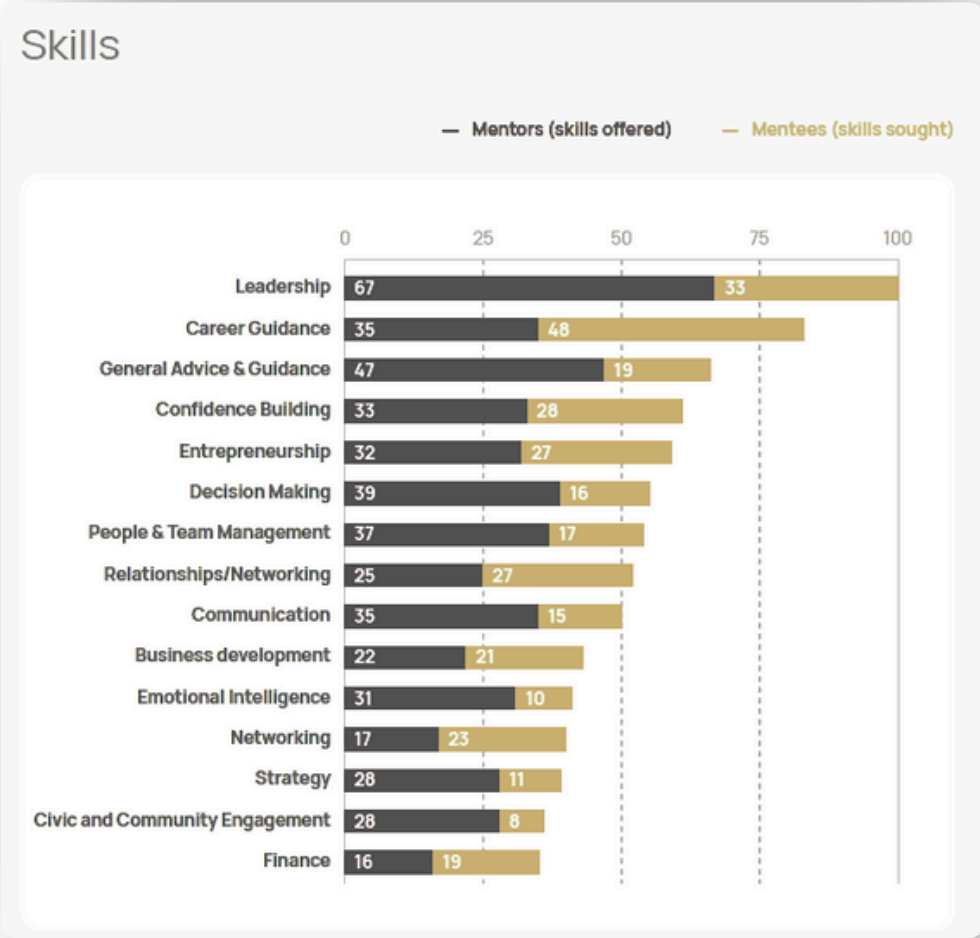
- **Be Involved Fair:** During Fall Welcome, we enjoyed a sunny day at Farrand Field, where we recruited students to get involved in leadership opportunities.
- **Admitted Buffs Days:** We participated in all Admitted Buffs Days, sharing compelling reasons for students interested in leadership to choose CU Boulder.
- **Sarah Gillis:** We invited Sarah Gillis, a Senior Space Operations Engineer at SpaceX and the youngest individual to participate in a spacewalk during the Polaris Dawn Mission. She spoke at an event open to all students, emphasizing the importance of student involvement in leadership.
- **Emotionally Response-Able Leadership:** This event during Leadership Week was open to all students, offering insights on:
  - A groundbreaking new theory regarding what your emotions are truly communicating.
  - The significant impacts of leveraging emotions to lead yourself and others.
  - A simple practice to enhance your emotional intelligence (EQ) for more effective leadership.
- **Leadership Through Sport Symposium:** We hosted a symposium for high school athletes, teaching them how their sports participation fosters leadership skills.
- **New Student Orientation:** We provided information on how incoming students can engage in leadership at CU Boulder.
- **Leadership Quiz:** A new, interactive quiz designed to connect students with a leadership program that aligns with their interests, major, and year at CU.





# PATHWAYS Boulder-CU Leadership Program

The Boulder-CU Leadership Program (BCLP), a **flagship initiative** from the Center for Leadership at CU Boulder, provides an experiential education opportunity aimed at **developing leadership skills** in students. This program pairs students with mentors from the Boulder community. The program focuses on both personal and professional growth through structured mentorship, ensuring that participants have access to essential resources and support for a rewarding learning experience.



This year our mentees were able to learn these skills from our mentors.



*“This program has had an incredible impact on me. I have started to change in the best ways possible and I am grateful to BCLP and to my mentor. I’ve always had opportunities come to me, but when I went to college, I realized that I needed to start being more proactive about my goals. My mentor has also helped me with taking control of my career goals and making the most of my university life. She has really brought back my motivation to be one of the best students.” - BCLP Mentee*

194

In 2024-2025 BCLP served **194** mentors and mentees, resulting in **97** successful pairs.

4.9

We received an average of **4.9** out of 5 for our **post meeting surveys**.

4.63

Our program had a **4.63** out of 5 **Average Mentoring Quality Score**, exceeding the benchmark MSQ of 4.2.

*“Overall, this experience has been one of the most positive I have had as a student.” - BCLP Mentee*

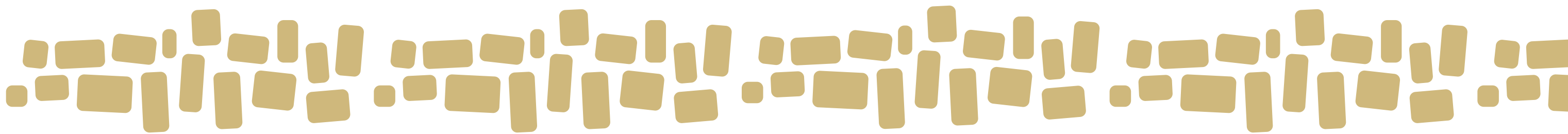


*“I truly think that BCLP is an amazing program that can help anyone, thank you again for making these opportunities possible.” - BCLP Mentee*

*“BCLP has made for a really enjoyable connection, one that has given me a greater sense of community with the university and Boulder.” - BCLP Mentee*



# EDUCATION



## LEADERSHIP STUDIES MINOR

We partner with the School of Education to offer the **Leadership Studies Minor (LSM)**, providing a **structured curriculum** that covers essential leadership theories and practices, and experiential learning. The minor requires the completion of **16 credit hours** of required and elective coursework in leadership foundations, application, and context, culminating in a **community-based capstone experience** where students practice, observe and reflect on leadership in a team-based practicum. Several curricular leadership programs offered in other departments are integrated as pathways to the Leadership Studies Minor.

Working with the LSM director and faculty, we held **six LEAD 1000 focus group sessions** with **136 students** at the end of the spring 2025 semester to qualitatively assess the introductory course open to all majors. Questions centered on students’ general thoughts about their course experience, feedback on course content, workload and structure, the number of students who had declared the minor, barriers to declaring it, and recommendations for promoting the minor across the university.

Overall findings indicate that LEAD 1000 is a good introduction to leadership, students enjoy the class and consider it **beneficial for their professional and personal growth**, and the small class size **fosters and encourages engagement, connection, and participation**. Areas for possible curricular and programmatic changes include the weekly reading workload, the structure and timing of the essay assignments, and additional mechanisms for promoting the minor among academic advisors and the student population.

## SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATE

Proposed fall 2024 (approval pending) in collaboration with the **Department of Environmental Studies** and **School of Education**, the Sustainability Leadership Certificate will provide students with an interdisciplinary opportunity to **build foundational scientific knowledge** and **cultivate leadership competencies** needed to meet global sustainability challenges. The certificate requires the completion of **15-17 credit hours** of coursework in leadership, introductory socio-environmental systems, intermediate socio-environmental systems, and an experiential learning component.

The certificate will support broader CU Boulder efforts to empower students through new curricula to **meet the sustainability challenges of the 21st century**.

## PEACE CORPS PREP CERTIFICATE

Launched in fall 2018 and housed within the Center for Leadership since fall 2023, Peace Corps Prep (PCP) is a certificate program open to all undergraduate students regardless of their major, minor, department, academic year or participation in other programs.

The PCP prepares future U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer applicants through sector-specific job skills, foreign language proficiency, intercultural competence, and professional leadership development skills. This framework integrates coursework with hands-on experience and professional development, and builds the foundation of core competencies critical to serving boldly with the Peace Corps and working collaboratively as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

**Since fall 2023 the program has grown from one student to nine students currently pursuing the certificate.**



# RIVER CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE



At the CU Boulder Center for Leadership, we believe in the power of **experiential learning** to develop leaders—the best way to learn to lead is to practice leading. The inaugural **River Conservation Leadership Intensive** provided just this opportunity—using the outdoors and a river to practice leadership—for **10 undergraduate students from nine different majors**, August 19-23, 2024. Along with four instructors and four guides, the students embarked on a white water rafting adventure in Colorado and Utah through the Gates of Lodore on the Green River in Dinosaur National Monument for three nights and four days of real-time experiential leadership learning.

On the river and in camp, students practiced and lived what it takes to be an **effective member of a team** and **hone their leadership skills** in communication, **group development** and **collaboration**. Specialized field discussions were held each day covering topics such as ecology, geography, policy, history and Indigenous knowledge and engagement. The ultimate goal was to foster and develop the next generation of water and river conservation leaders and stewards.

*“I am truly grateful for the opportunity to have participated in the RCLI program and look forward to utilizing the knowledge and skills I acquired in future academic, professional, and leisure environments.” -Sophie Pinard, International Affairs Student*

## AFFILIATES

The Center for Leadership’s **affiliate model** is a **unique and defining characteristic** of our strategy. The University of Colorado Boulder landscape is rich with leadership opportunities for students. The affiliate model allows us to connect to this network of leadership programs, and faculty and staff professionals. The affiliate partners know their students best, and collaborating with them helps us **better invest in the leadership potential of all students**.

This year, the Center initiated a strategic campaign to gather information from affiliate partners to develop future initiatives. We understand that the affiliate model is a **reciprocal relationship**, and to best serve our affiliate partners, every affiliate organization will have the opportunity to **provide insight and feedback** through **meetings, surveys, and focus groups**.

These initiatives will have the goal of **elevating leadership education across campus**. Based on emerging themes from the campaign, the initiatives will include aspects of development and evaluation of existing leadership offerings, financial support for programming, and knowledge-sharing among affiliate programs. Initial action has been taken (see page 22 for more information) and the Center is looking forward to continuing development in the 2025-2026 academic year.



# EXPERIENTIAL LEADERSHIP **INTENSIVE**

The 2024-25 academic year was the second year of implementing our fully revamped ELI program. Our partners include the **CU Boulder Outdoor Pursuits Challenge Course** and **Mountain Research Station (MRS)**. The ELI provides opportunities for participants to **practice** and **develop** leadership competencies such as **teamwork, communication, inclusion, problem solving** and **decision making** in a hands-on, challenging outdoor setting, while fostering self-awareness, resilience and forging meaningful connections with other student leaders and nature.

The two-day fall semester program included **13 participants** from **four affiliates**, while the one-day spring program included **12 participants** from **two affiliates**. New for spring 2025, in partnership with the CU Boulder President's Leadership Class, we hosted three students from the University of Colorado Colorado Springs Chancellor's Leadership Class.

Thematic analysis results from the fall 2024 ELI program indicate that it provided a powerful blend of structured and unstructured activities that **promoted trust, self-reflection, and leadership development**. Key themes included the value of vulnerability in building trust, the importance of adaptability, and the significance of communication and teamwork.

Overall, the program left a **lasting impression on participants**, equipping them with skills and insights to navigate their leadership journeys with confidence, authenticity, and adaptability. The overwhelmingly positive feedback underscores its success in fostering growth and community among emerging leaders.

*"I learned a lot about the fundamentals of leadership this weekend. On our hike, I appreciated the fact that we got to have one on one talks with a peer regarding different aspects of leadership. This method allowed for authentic and raw conversation, which was very nice. I learned a lot about how others operated and the mindsets they have, which was a great learning opportunity."*





# COACHING

The Center for Leadership Coaching Program supports students from affiliate programs in enhancing their impact as leaders by creating **professional-level, one-on-one coaching engagements** with certified coaches over the course of a semester (fall or spring). The program consists of the following benefits for the student leader:

- Up to **10 hours** of leadership coaching over one semester
- **EQi 2.0** Higher Education Emotional Intelligence Assessment (before and after program participation) with a coach debrief session
- A custom **goal worksheet** identifying a focus related to leadership
- **Leadership resources** relevant to the student

For the 2024-25 academic year, we reached a **record level** of participation across our affiliates, serving **71 students with 22 coaches!**

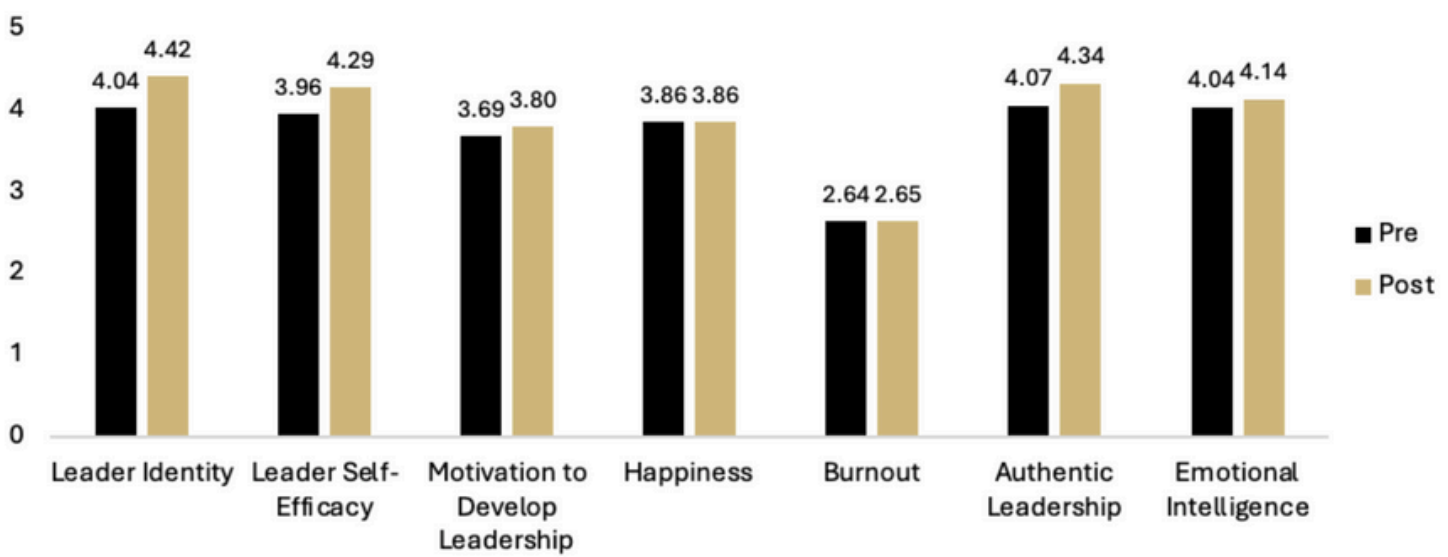
*“I’ve started to put a serious emphasis on growing my emotional intelligence and awareness. My coaching experience has started to give me a clearer head and mind when making decisions and allowed me to align myself more with what my values are.”*

*“I really enjoyed this program! I’m grateful for my coach and the work I did throughout the semester.”*

## Pre-Post Findings: What Changed After Coaching?

The chart below shows change in student outcomes from before to after coaching. Three of the seven outcomes measured on the pre-post survey increased significantly after coaching: **Leader Identity, Leader Self-efficacy and Authentic Leadership**. The remaining outcomes measured (Motivation to Develop Leadership, Happiness, Burnout, Emotional Intelligence) did not change significantly after coaching.

Changes in Student Outcomes from Before to After Coaching





# GRADUATING LEADERS OF THE YEAR

2024-2025



Angel Nuñez  
SASC



Lupita Oritz  
Herd Leadership Council



William Ashcraft  
Learning Assistant Program



Mitali Desai  
Leeds Consulting Group



Rachel Warren  
Leeds Scholars



Oliver Casis  
Air Force ROTC



Katie Ellis  
Leadership Studies Minor



Camden Dempsey  
Scripps Athletic  
Leadership Program



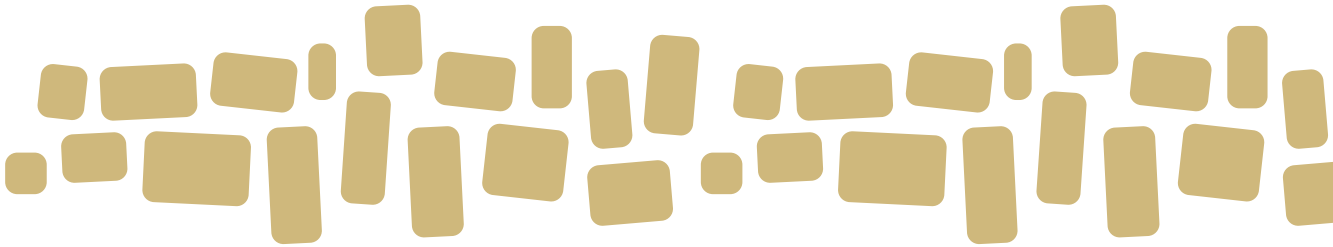
Kiah May  
Engineering Leadership  
Program



Aaditya Pore  
Presidents Leadership  
Class

The Center for Leadership recognized **ten** exceptional CU Boulder student leaders with the 2024–2025 Graduating Leaders of the Year Award. Chosen by their campus leadership programs, these students demonstrated outstanding **academic achievement, community service, character, resilience**, and embodiment of the **Colorado Creed**. They were honored with a special recognition at the Men’s Basketball game on January 28 and at the Spring Leadership Summit in April.

# NEWTON FELLOWS



This year, the Center for Leadership proudly launched the **Newton Fellows program**, our new signature initiative recognizing CU Boulder’s most promising undergraduate leaders. Selected from nearly **60 nominations** across our affiliate programs, the inaugural cohort of **26 students** from **14 affiliate programs** will engage in a yearlong experience focused on connection, coaching, and leadership development. Named in honor of Quigg and Virginia Newton, the program celebrates a legacy of civic responsibility and empowers students to lead with courage, compassion, and integrity.







# Listening, Learning, and Evolving: Affiliate Engagement at the Center for Leadership

Over the past year, we conducted a comprehensive listening tour of our affiliate programs. Through a series of conversations and surveys, we gathered invaluable feedback about what’s working, what’s not, and how the Center can more effectively support and collaborate with our network.


## The research produced three takeaways:



**Desire for Context:** Affiliates expressed interest in better understanding how their programs fit within the broader leadership ecosystem at the Center and on CU’s campus.



**Diverse Needs and Goals:** Affiliates vary widely in what they hope to gain from their relationship with the Center—and how well current offerings are meeting those goals.



**Call for Deeper Collaboration:** There is an opportunity for meaningful, applicable collaboration, particularly in ways that recognize and build on the unique strengths of each affiliate.

## In response to these takeaway, we took the following action.

- **Program Evolution:** Based on feedback, we sunset the Leading EDGE program to create space for more flexible and relevant student engagement opportunities.
- **A-Lab Development:** We’re piloting a new initiative, the Affiliate Lab (“A-Lab”), to foster affiliate-led collaboration and innovation. Through A-Lab, small affiliate “pods” will co-design and implement projects that advance leadership education within their programs, supported by targeted funding.
- **Improved Communications:** Our newsletter has been streamlined to better meet the needs of our busy affiliates, and we are actively evaluating our communication tools for clarity and reach.
- **Strategic Program Refinement:** We’ve launched a review of our affiliate benefits and services, exploring new ways to ensure our offerings are mission-aligned and sustainable.
- **Recognition and Expansion:** Building on the success of the Student Leader of the Year award, we introduced the Newton Fellows program to continue spotlighting excellence in leadership.

**This year’s affiliate engagement process reflects our belief that leadership is collaborative, responsive, and ever-evolving. We’re grateful for the honest input and look forward to continued growth—together.**

# KNOWLEDGE

The Center for Leadership integrates leadership **research** into **practice** to continuously refine and improve its leadership development efforts. The Knowledge component ensures that leadership education is **data-driven** and **grounded in theory**. The Center for Leadership collaborates with faculty and students on leadership research projects to remain on the **forefront of leadership research**. Rigorous program evaluation methods are implemented to measure effectiveness and enhance leadership development outcomes.

Drawing from meta-analyses and instructional design literature, the Center incorporates best practices for curriculum design and evaluation (Lacerenza et al., 2017; Reyes et al., 2019). The combination of academic research, student feedback, and program-level data ensures continuous improvement and accountability

## Leadership Colorado Needs & ILA Future Forward

In August, the University of Colorado Boulder hosted two dynamic leadership events that brought together over 200 experts from across Colorado and around the globe. The Center for Leadership and Boettcher Foundation convened the Leadership Colorado Needs gathering, which fostered meaningful connections among 90+ statewide leadership practitioners through sessions on collaboration, AI, and bridge-building across differences. The following day, the Future Forward Leadership Summit, co-hosted with the International Leadership Association, drew a global audience to explore the next 25 years of leadership. With powerful keynotes, collaborative breakout sessions, and bold ideas, both events sparked momentum that will shape leadership development in Colorado and beyond for years to come.





# KNOWLEDGE SHARING



## Presentations at Conferences

Johnson, S.K. (2024). INCLUSIFY. Howard University and Department of State.

Ward, E., Deas, F., Johnson, S., K., Pearl, A., & Williams, N. (2025, January). The Carnegie Elective Classifications Research Lab: Examining Public Purposes and Impact across Elective Classified Institutions. Panel accepted to present at the AAC&U Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.

Johnson, S. K. (August, 2024). Panelist for Navigating leadership: Evidence-based strategies for leadership development. Annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago, IL.

Johnson, S. K. (August, 2024). Panelist for Leader-follower identity dynamics: Current and future directions. Annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago, IL.

Webb, S. (October 2024). Guest Lecturer on conservation and sustainability leadership, CU Boulder Masters of the Environment, Capstone Innovation Lab, Boulder, CO.

Johnson, S. K., & Webb, S. (November, 2024). Panelists for Conservation and Relational Ecologies (CARE) Workshop: Advancing Indigenous Led Models of Conservation, CU Boulder Institute of Behavioral Science, Center for Native American and Indigenous Studies, Geography Department, Boulder, CO.

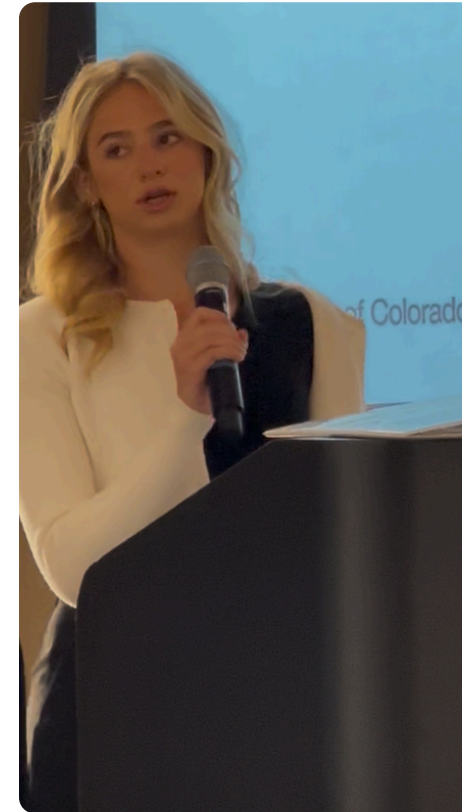
## Leadership Publications

Woods, A., Zajac, S. A., Middleton, E. D., Cavanaugh, K. J., Hayes, W. C., Johnson, S. K., & Holladay, C. L. (2024). Doing the work: The role of inclusive leadership in promoting psychological safety and openness to diversity through diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. *Psychology of Leaders and Leadership*, 27, 115-142.

Lacerenza, C. N., Johnson, S. K., Lambert, B., & Van Wagoner, H. P. (2024). The benefits of inclusive organizational behavior: Why diversity climate improves mental health and retention among women during a crisis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*.

Johnson, S. K., Murphy, S. E., Brown, R., & Westmoreland, K. (2024). Filling the leadership gap: Helping your employees thrive bolsters leadership success. In *Thriving as a Leader: Evidence-Based Strategies for Leadership Development*. Susanne Braun, Tiffany Hansbrough, Robert G. Lord, Olga Epitropaki, Rosalie J. Hall, & Gregory A. Ruark, Eds. Routledge Leadership: Research and Practice.

Johnson, S. K. & Murphy, S. E. (2024). Developmental perspectives on leadership identity across the lifespan. *Oxford Handbook of Leadership, Followership, and Identity*.



Sage Adelman, CFL student research assistant, presenting findings of research at the CHSSA Leadership Through Sport Summit

## LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS

This year we worked on a research project in collaboration with CU Athletics. **Sage Adelman** (undergraduate, Psychology) led the research to investigate the complex relationship between **collegiate athletic participation and leadership competency development** among student-athletes. While some scholars argue that athletic involvement inherently fosters leadership through teamwork, communication, and responsibility, others contend that leadership skills only emerge when athletes are given intentional developmental opportunities such as team captaincy or structured training.

To examine this debate, a literature review of 16 peer-reviewed studies—categorized into correlational, comparative, and pre-post test designs—was conducted. The findings revealed that **12 studies reported a positive association** between athletic participation and leadership development, lending partial support to the link between collegiate sports participation and leadership. The pre – post studies, however, show that within a given year, athletes may not grow in their leadership more than other students. Instead, leadership growth is significantly amplified when athletes engage in purposeful leadership roles or interventions. The findings underscore the **importance of formal feedback and developmental programming** in translating athletic experience into sustained leadership competencies.

Despite promising findings, the study is limited by the relatively small sample of articles and lack of original data. Future research, particularly involving firsthand data collection at institutions like the University of Colorado Boulder, is necessary to clarify causal mechanisms and **explore variations across gender, sport level, and team roles**. Overall, this study suggests that while collegiate athletics can promote leadership development, doing so effectively **requires intentional design and support**.





# LEARNING IS LEADERSHIP

The Center for Leadership places great importance on lifelong learning. This year, our team engaged in numerous training sessions, attended various conferences, and even earned degrees!

Stefanie

- Future Forward Leadership Conference, International Leadership Association, August 2024, Boulder CO
- Academy of Management Conference August 2024, Chicago
- International Leadership Association October 2024, Chicago (Board meeting and conference)
- AAC&U Conference January 2025, Washington DC
- MD Anderson Leadership Institute Board Meeting May 2025, Houston TX
- International Perspectives on Leadership Conference May 2025, Mykonos Greece
- New Directions in Leadership Conference and League of Leaders meeting June 2025, Ann Arbor MI

Seth

- Future Forward Leadership Conference, International Leadership Association, August 2024, Boulder, CO
- Outfitting Tomorrow Summit: Shaping the Sustainable Outdoor Industry, Colorado State University Department of Design & Merchandising, Office of Engagement & Extension, November 2024, CSU Spur Campus, Denver, CO
- Course Design Series: Prompt Engineering and Productive Faculty AI Use, CU Boulder Learning Design Group, Division of Continuing Education, November 2024, Boulder, CO
- Conservation and Relational Ecologies (CARE) Workshop: Advancing Indigenous Led Models of Conservation, CU Boulder Institute of Behavioral Science, Center for Native American and Indigenous Studies, Geography Department, November 2024, Boulder, CO
- Association for Experiential Education International Conference, November 2024, Estes Park, CO
- Utilizing Cultural Intelligence to Advance Tribal Engagement Workshop, CU Boulder Niwot Ridge Long-term Ecological Research Program (LTER), Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, March 2025, Boulder, CO
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, Conservation Social Science–Leadership, Colorado State University, Defended May 2025, Fort Collins, CO
- Yampa River Awareness Project (YRAP) 2025, Friends of the Yampa, American Rivers, OARS, Dinosaur National Monument, May 2025, Steamboat Springs, CO
- Sustainability Research and Innovation Congress 2025, June 2025, Chicago, IL

Jessi

- Future Forward Leadership Conference, International Leadership Association, August 2024, Boulder CO
- University Perspective Program - Participants gain firsthand knowledge of the university through meetings with senior leaders on the Boulder campus and each of the other three campuses in the CU System and the System Office
- Supporting Student Resiliency CU Boulder Human Resources
- Becoming an Inclusive Leader CU Boulder Human Resources
- Simplify Language CU Boulder Human Resources
- Intentional Program Design for Maximum Impact with the Boettcher Leadership Practitioners Collaborative
- Employee Management and Compliance Essentials CU Boulder Human Resources
- Buff Way Training | CU Boulder Communicators
- Mentorship in Higher Education Roundtables Leeds School of Business
- Master of Science in Organizational Leadership University of Colorado Boulder

Chau

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|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Finance/Budgeting Training      | • UCB Budget                     | • HCM Paying People              |
| • PeopleSoft Finance              | • Gift Fund Management           | • HCM Recruiting with CU Careers |
| • PeopleSoft Fin: Journal Entries | • Human Capital Management (HCM) | • HCM Updating Data              |
| • Fund Accounting Overview        | • Software Training              | • Information Security           |
|                                   | • HCM Fundamentals               |                                  |



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