



Center for Leadership

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Annual Report

2025-2026

LIFT OFF: A YEAR OF GROWTH, CONNECTION, AND IMPACT

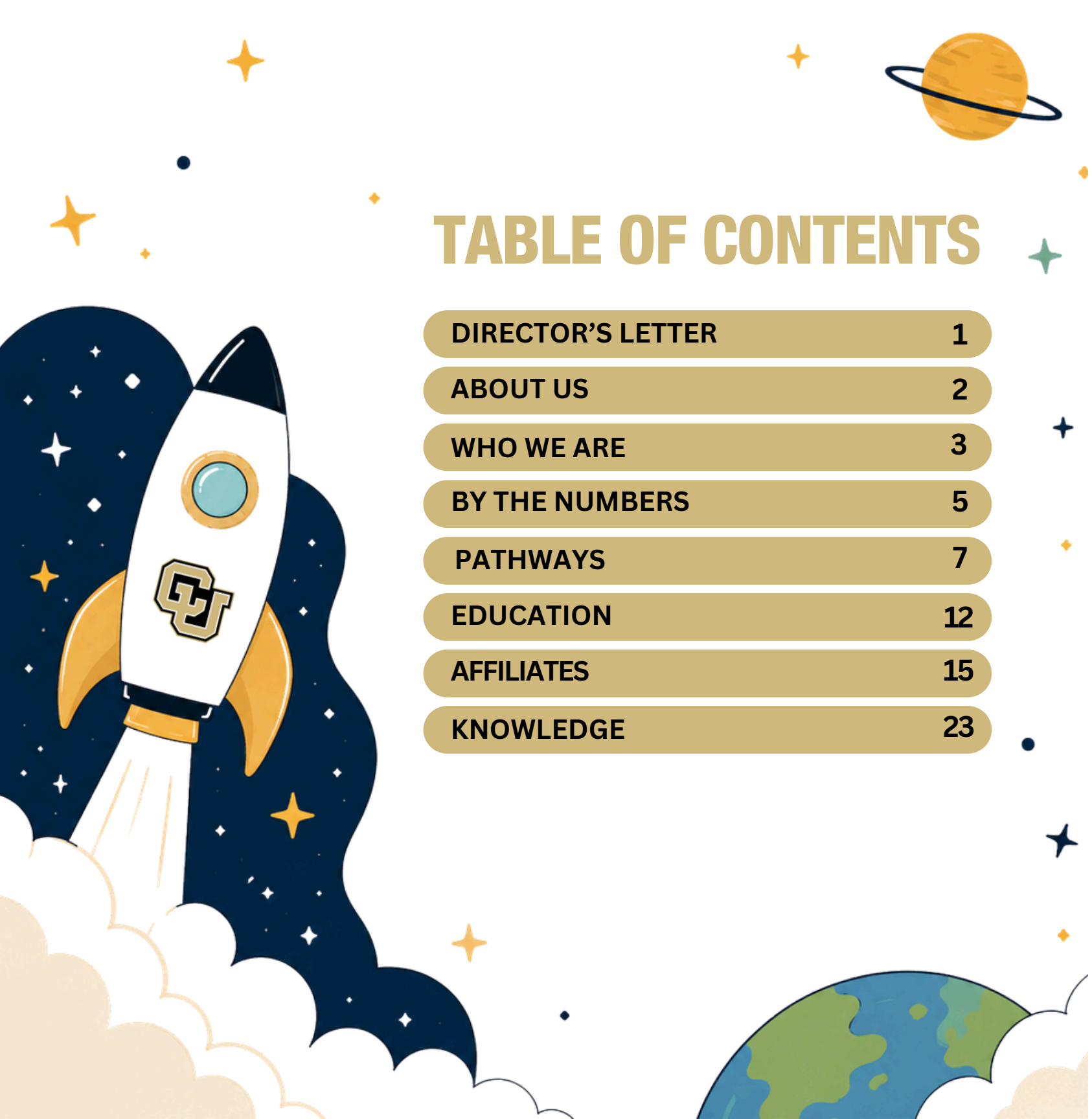


TABLE OF CONTENTS

DIRECTOR’S LETTER	1
ABOUT US	2
WHO WE ARE	3
BY THE NUMBERS	5
PATHWAYS	7
EDUCATION	12
AFFILIATES	15
KNOWLEDGE	23

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year marked an important milestone for the Center for Leadership as we continued to expand both the reach and impact of leadership education at CU Boulder. Across our programs, partnerships, research, and student experiences, one theme consistently emerged: leadership matters most when it creates meaningful impact for others.

One of our most exciting updates this year was participating in the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) for the first time. As the largest international study of college student leadership, the MSL allows us to benchmark CU Boulder against many of the top leadership institutions in higher education. This work will provide critical insights into how our students are developing as leaders and will help us continue improving leadership education through evidence-based practice.

We were also honored to welcome two extraordinary women leaders to campus this year. Producer, entrepreneur, and philanthropist Gigi Pritzker shared lessons on creativity, leadership, and storytelling, while Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai inspired our community with her courage, humility, and unwavering commitment to education and justice. Her reminder that leadership is about serving a common cause deeply reflects the mission of the Center for Leadership.

This year also brought transformational momentum through philanthropy and partnership. We are profoundly grateful to alum Heidi Wagner and her family for their visionary \$5 million gift establishing the Wagner Family Civic Impact Initiative. This initiative will create new opportunities for students to work directly with the Boulder community to address complex civic challenges through leadership and collaboration.

In addition, we successfully raised over \$1 million to support the Newton Leadership Fellows program, allowing us to continue investing in high-impact leadership experiences for exceptional students across campus.

As you read this report, I hope you see what we see every day: leadership is thriving at CU Boulder. Thank you to our students, staff, faculty, alumni, affiliates, donors, and community partners for helping us build a stronger, more connected future together.

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



ABOUT US



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 VISION

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



OUR GOAL

The University of Colorado Boulder will be the nationally renowned destination for students seeking transformational leadership education.

HOW WE DO IT

The CFL helps Buffs reach their leadership PEAK through:

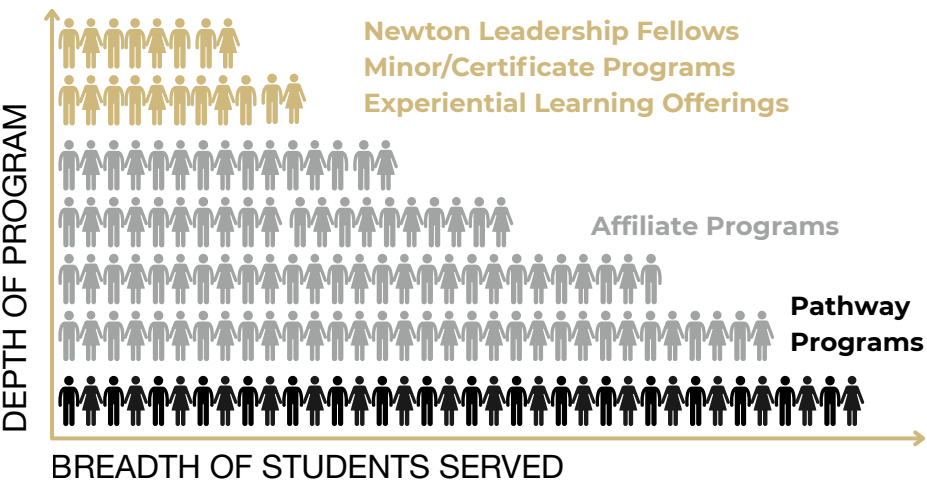
- PATHWAYS for students to start their leadership journey
- EDUCATION (curricular and co-curricular) offered by CFL
- AFFILIATE support for other campus leadership programs
- KNOWLEDGE generated through research to fuel programs

The PEAK model 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. We encourage students to develop through four principles: Learn, Observe, Practice, and Feedback.

OUR COMPETENCY MODEL



SCALEABILITY OF PEAK MODEL



THE PEOPLE AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL

CFL Professional Staff

Phil DiStefano | Senior Executive Director, Professor of Education, Chancellor Emeritus

Jessi Follett | Assistant Director

Stefanie Johnson | Director & Professor of Business

Chau McAusland | Office Manager

Chloe Nicklas | Program Coordinator for Civic Impact

Seth Webb | Director of Academics

CFL Student Staff

Sage Adelman | Research Assistant

Nora Assougdam | Program Assistant

Charlotte Croy | Social Media & Communication Assistant

Anastasia Gallegos-Roque | Program Assistant

Avery Schnurr | Research Assistant

Executive Committee

Scott Battle | Division of Continuing Education & Professional Studies

David Callan | Scripps Leadership & Career Development

Emily Cosnett | Outdoor Pursuits

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

At the end of 2025, we sunset the Executive Committee with deep gratitude for the critical role its members played in establishing the foundation of the Center for Leadership. As the Center has grown and matured, we are evolving our governance structure to reflect current needs while building on the strong groundwork they helped create.



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 Emeritus



Jan Burton
Retired Business Executive,
Community Volunteer



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



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

18,500+

Students served through
our leadership affiliates

246

Participants in the Boulder-
CU Leadership Program

2,000+

At the leadership keynotes
sponsored in part by the CFL

211

Inaugural year Emerging
Leadership Academy
participants

358

Digital badges and credentials
awarded for leadership

12

New affiliate leadership
programs

26

Participants in the inaugural
Newton Fellowship

14

Graduating Leaders of
the Year

PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP

The Center for Leadership is committed to expanding access to leadership development for all CU Buffs, ensuring every student can engage in leadership in ways that align with their identities, interests, and goals. We prioritize broad, intentional outreach to connect students with opportunities that fit them best, from tabling at campus events to our Leadership Involvement Quiz and strong partnerships across campus.

We also offer two foundational, open-access programs, the Boulder CU Leadership Program and the Emerging Leadership Academy, both intentionally designed to meet the needs of busy students and lower barriers to participation. Beyond our own programs, we connect students to a wide network of affiliate leadership opportunities and bring globally recognized leaders to campus who represent diverse pathways and perspectives, allowing students to see leadership in action and recognize themselves within it.

Through our Pathways approach, the Center for Leadership brings to life our core belief that **leadership is within us all.**



PATHWAYS Student Outreach

The Center for Leadership expanded its reach across campus, connecting more CU Boulder students than ever with the message that leadership is within us all and that the Center is here to support their development.



Our impact in 2025-2026

300	40	135	1,192	2,482
New students reached through partnership with the Stampede Leadership Camp	Events attended across campus	Students completed intake forms to learn more about getting involved	Total Instagram followers	Total LinkedIn followers

The CFL also increased visibility through external recognition, including a feature in the Boulder Daily Camera highlighting the breadth and impact of leadership programming available to students.

In partnership with Ralphie’s Closet and Career Services, the CFL helped launch a professional clothing pop-up, providing free access to professional attire for students across campus. We are proud to say that we gave away **346 items of clothing to 168 students**. Due to its strong success, this initiative will continue into the 2026–2027 academic year through Career Services.

SEE LEADERSHIP
IN ACTION HERE!

Read about our impact
in the Daily Camera





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 leadership growth through structured mentorship, ensuring that participants have access to essential resources and support for a rewarding learning experience.

This year, the Center for Leadership issued BCLP mentors and mentees a digital badge of completion through Credly. Digital badges are verifiable, secure digital credentials that represent specific skills, achievements, or competencies, which provide instant proof of abilities allowing students to boost employability and track their professional and experiential education.

246

MENTORS
& MENTEES

29.5%

INCREASE IN
PARTICIPATION
FROM 24/25

4.6/5

AVG.
MENTORING
QUALITY SCORE



"I think this program is a microcosm of what CU's 'secret sauce,' and distinction will be as an institution which is our 'whole person,' approach to stewarding the lives entrusted to us. Enrollment is much more than classes, exams, and 4-6 years; we are shepherding souls, minds, and hearts. What a gift we've been entrusted with..." - BCLP Mentor

Participants combined meaningful leadership mentorship with fun through workshops, professional preparation and mock interviews, attending community events, outdoor activities (including skiing and hiking), volunteering together, and other growth-focused experiences.

"Getting a fresh point of view and outside opinions was something I didn't realize I would appreciate so much when entering this program." - BCLP Mentee



Student Reflections on Areas of Growth

- Redefining Leadership
- Networking as Curiosity
- Confidence
- Imposter Syndrome
- Accountability
- Stoicism
- Work-Life Balance

Mentor Insights on Student Development

- Academic Adaptability
- Goal Setting
- Resiliency
- Time Management
- Mindful Task Balance
- Communication Styles
- Career Clarification
- Navigating the Industry

Leadership Growth

Positive Contribution to the
Mentoring Process:
3.71 / 4.0

Constructive Feedback:
3.86 / 4.0

Goals Progress:
3.57 / 4.0

Across all categories, the
cumulative average
performance rating sits at
an outstanding 3.75 out of
4.0.

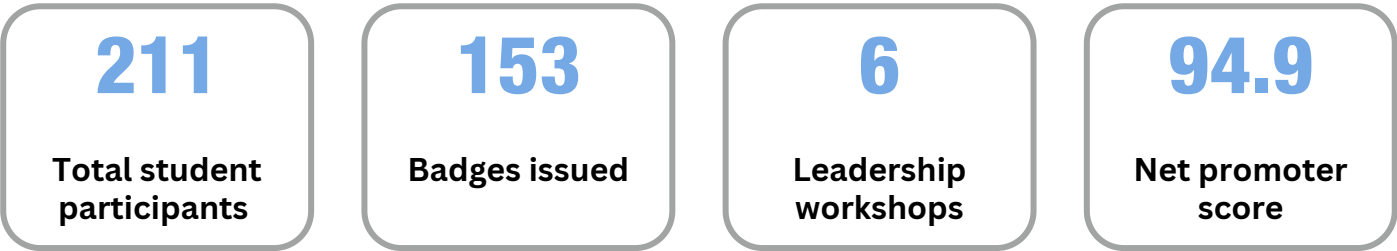
**"I would recommend
(and have
recommended) this
program to every
student at CU. Your
mentor is someone
who will always
support and
encourage you. It's a
great feeling to have a
wise person in your
corner who will always
be there for you!" -
BCLP Mentee**

PATHWAYS Emerging Leadership Academy

This year, the Center for Leadership successfully launched the Emerging Leadership Academy (ELA), a campus-wide leadership development program designed to help students strengthen their capacity to lead in meaningful and authentic ways. Through interactive workshops, keynote presentations, guided reflection, and peer dialogue, participants explore leadership as a practice that can be developed through experience, curiosity, and intentional action.

Grounded in the Center for Leadership's educational approach, ELA creates opportunities for students to connect with fellow leaders, engage with diverse perspectives, and apply new insights to real-world challenges. By bringing together students from across campus, the program fosters a community committed to personal growth, collaboration, and positive change.

Key Results



“I will take what I learned today and apply it to strengthen my leadership skills, by not just guiding others but empowering them to become leaders themselves.”

★ Leadership Voices

David Adelman • Joseph Barela • Multicultural Leadership Scholars/Leadership Studies Minor • Peak to Peak Leadership • Matthew Zummo • Rick George



Our Leadership Journey



11 Center for Leadership



PATHWAYS Speakers



GIGI PRITZKER

The Center for Leadership continued to bring globally recognized leaders to campus through high-impact speaker events. As part of the Leo Hill Leadership Speaker Series, Emmy Award-winning producer and CEO Gigi Pritzker engaged the CU Boulder community in a conversation on leadership as a series of intentional choices, highlighting the power of storytelling to drive cultural impact, elevate diverse voices, and inspire meaningful change.



MALALA YOUSAFZAI

In partnership with the Conference on World Affairs, the CFL also welcomed Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai as the conference's closing speaker. Drawing on her global advocacy for girls' education and human rights, Yousafzai delivered a powerful message on leadership grounded in collective action, resilience, and the critical role of young people in advancing equity and opportunity worldwide.



EDUCATION

The education component of the Center for Leadership's model encompasses a broad ecosystem of leadership learning opportunities embedded within the academic experience. This includes formal coursework through the Leadership Studies Minor, which provides students with a structured, theory-informed foundation in leadership while allowing them to explore applications across disciplines. The Center for Leadership also supports the Peace Corps Prep certificate, which integrates leadership development with global engagement, intercultural competence, and public service, preparing students for impactful work both locally and internationally.



LEADERSHIP STUDIES MINOR

The Leadership Studies Minor has added several courses to enhance students' learning experience. New courses include LEAD 1571: Topics in Leadership: Introduction to Research Methods, which covers research design, data collection, and evidence-based approaches to leadership scholarship and LEAD 2000: Experiential Learning and Reflective Leadership Practice, which covers leadership development through experiential learning, structured reflection, and intentional personal growth.



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 major, academic year, or prior involvement in leadership programming. PCP prepares future applicants through a combination of sector-specific training, foreign language development, intercultural competence, and professional leadership skills.



To better understand and strengthen the program, the CFL partnered with a master's practicum student to conduct a meta-analysis of PCP programs across peer and high-performing institutions nationwide. The findings reinforced several key strengths of CU Boulder's model, including the value of a dedicated on-campus Peace Corps recruiter, which allows for sustained relationship-building with students and faculty, and the strategic placement of PCP within the CFL which expands the program's visibility through established campus networks and partnerships.

The analysis also highlighted opportunities to strengthen cohort identity and community. The program's flexible, self-directed structure can make it difficult to foster sustained connection among participants or coordinate shared experiences, pointing to a need for more intentional community-building and structured engagement opportunities in the future.

Together, these insights are helping to inform a more intentional approach to recruitment, program design, and student engagement, ensuring that Peace Corps Prep at CU Boulder continues to grow as an accessible and impactful pathway for globally minded student leaders.

In the 2025–2026 academic year, 17 students were enrolled in the certificate, nearly doubling participation from the previous year. This growth aligns with CU Boulder's continued national leadership in Peace Corps engagement, with the university ranked #2 in the nation for Peace Corps volunteers for the second consecutive year.

AFFILIATES

Collaboration remains central to scaling leadership education at a university serving nearly 40,000 students. The Center for Leadership continues to strengthen its network of affiliate leadership programs, creating a shared ecosystem for resources, best practices, and innovation in leadership development. Through these partnerships, leadership education reaches students across disciplines and experiences, ensuring it remains accessible, relevant, and responsive to a wide range of identities, interests, learning styles, and career goals.

In 2025–2026, the affiliate network expanded to 52 programs, up from 40 the previous year, significantly increasing the breadth of leadership opportunities available to students across campus. These programs engage students through varied approaches, from classroom-based learning to experiential, community-engaged, and place-based leadership development.

The CFL supports affiliate programs by providing deeper opportunities for students to practice and apply leadership through initiatives such as the Coaching Program, Newton Leadership Fellows, and the Wagner Family Initiative for Civic Impact. We also celebrate student achievement through the Graduating Leaders of the Year award.

In addition, the Center invests in faculty and staff who lead these programs through the A-LAB initiative, offering professional development and grant funding to advance intentional, evidence-informed leadership education across their respective programs.

Our Affiliates

- Air Force ROTC
- Army ROTC
- Art Buffs Collective
- Benson Undergraduate Fellows Program
- Burridge Center for Finance
- Business Leadership Certificate
- Campos Center | BOLD Scholars
- Center for African & African American Studies (The CAAAS | The Cause)
- The Center for Cultural Connections & Community
- Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility
- Certificate in Social Innovation Program
- Conference on World Affairs
- CU GOLD
- CU Wildlife Club
- CU Student Government
- Dalai Lama Fellows
- Distinguished Speakers Board
- Education Abroad
- Engineering Leadership Program
- Engineering Management Program
- Entrepreneurship Center for Music
- Environmental Center
- Fraternity & Sorority Life
- Graduate & Professional Student Government
- Herd Leadership Council
- Innovation & Entrepreneurship Initiative
- Journey Leaders Program
- Kiewit Design-Build Scholars Program
- Leadership Studies Minor
- Leadership & Community Engagement Major
- Learning Assistant Program
- Leeds Consulting Group
- Leeds Global Initiatives
- Leeds Mentoring Programs
- Leeds Scholars
- Masters of the Environment
- Master of Science in Organizational Leadership
- Multicultural Leadership Scholars
- Navy ROTC
- Office of Graduate Access and Retention
- Outdoor Pursuits
- Outdoor Recreation Economy Program
- Peace, Conflict, and Security Program
- Presidents Leadership Class
- Public Speaking Club
- Residence Hall Association
- SCRIPPS Leadership & Career Development
- Service Learning & Impact in Community Engagement
- SPIKE Center for Sustainability Education
- Student Academic Success Center
- Undergraduate Enrichment Programs
- YoungLife College

AFFILIATES A-LAB

The 2025–2026 academic year marked the launch of A-LAB (Affiliate Leadership Accelerator Bootcamp), a signature initiative designed to strengthen leadership education across CU Boulder through targeted grants, professional development, and collaborative innovation. In its inaugural year, A-LAB funded nine affiliate-led projects spanning academic programs, student affairs, and co-curricular leadership experiences, piloting new approaches grounded in reflection, practice, and real-world application.

This year, the A-Lab cohort began their journey with a five-day immersive experience, including four days of intensive training through the International Leadership Association’s Leadership Educators Academy, focused on leadership theory, pedagogy, collaborative program design, and systems-level thinking. A fifth day, hosted by the Center for Leadership, fostered collaboration between cohort members, and established the groundwork for the project grant.

To support their work, participants received a \$5,000 grant in the first year to launch a new leadership initiative, which will be followed by \$2,000 annually for the next two years. They also joined three-person learning pods that offer feedback, encourage collaboration, and provide input on projects aimed at advancing leadership development within their units or across the university.



A-LAB Projects

The Presidents Leadership Class

Implemented a strengths-based approach that helped students better understand their contributions, navigate team dynamics, and lead with confidence.

The Masters of the Environment

Developed a sustainability leadership framework emphasizing systems thinking, collaboration, storytelling, and real-world impact.

The Masters of Science in Organizational Leadership

Redesigned the ProLab experience through student-centered resources, partnerships, and engagement strategies that strengthen leadership and career readiness.

The Burrige Center for Finance

Connected leadership development with finance through a student advisory group, created a physical space for student learning, and designed a framework to selecting future Newton Fellows.

The Peace, Conflict, and Security Program

Integrated leadership speakers, reflection and CliftonStrengths into coursework, increasing self-awareness and teamwork skills.

New Student & Family Programs

Enhanced Journey Leader training through retreats and team challenges that built confidence, collaboration, and community.

The Scripps Leadership & Career Development

Launched a leadership academy that increased confidence and broadened participants’ understanding of leadership across multiple areas of athletes’ lives.

Student Academic Success Center

Strengthened student voice through advisory leadership structures that connected students with decision-makers and campus leadership.



Across all nine projects, A-LAB expanded leadership learning through innovative programs, partnerships, and student-centered experiences.

Newton Leadership Fellows

This academic year marked the successful launch of the Newton Leadership Fellows, a leadership development experience designed to recognize and invest in CU Boulder’s most exceptional student leaders. The inaugural cohort brought together 26 Fellows representing diverse majors, identities, and leadership programs across campus. Through a combination of coaching, immersive experiences, and applied learning, the program cultivated leadership growth grounded in self-awareness, collaboration, and real-world impact.



Fellows were recognized at graduation with a micro-credential and custom stole, marking their achievement as members of the inaugural cohort.

Transformational Growth and Impact

Across the cohort, Fellows reported strong and measurable leadership growth. In a post-program self-assessment, participants rated their leadership development on a scale of 1–10, with the majority clustering between 7 and 10, and several reporting exceptional growth at 10/10 or higher.

Power of Community and Connection

A defining strength was the cohort model, intentionally bringing together students from across disciplines and leadership experiences. Fellows consistently cited this diversity and community as one of the most transformative aspects of the program. Participants described the experience as expanding their perspectives and breaking down silos.

Applied Leadership in Action

The Newton Fellowship emphasized practice-based learning, culminating in the Changemaker Challenge. Fellows praised the experience as a meaningful opportunity to apply leadership skills in a collaborative, high-pressure environment. As one participant shared, “Practicing real leadership skills in a structured but independent setting during the Changemakers Challenge was a really strong close out to the fellowship.”



Leadership Identity and Lasting Impact

The Newton Fellowship advanced three core outcomes: recognizing student leaders, fostering interdisciplinary connection, and strengthening confidence in leadership competencies. Evidence from the inaugural cohort shows strong progress across each of these goals. Fellows described increased confidence and self-efficacy, with many noting a shift in how they viewed themselves as leaders.

“I learned to trust myself more and respect my own leadership.” - Newton Fellow

Looking Ahead

As a pilot year, the 2025–2026 cohort provided valuable insights for future growth. Feedback pointed to opportunities to further strengthen cohort connection through additional structured interactions and to expand experiential learning throughout the year.

AFFILIATES 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. This year we were excited to offer the coaching experience for an extended period of time to our Newton Fellows, they received up to 14 hours over the academic year, while we ran the original 10-hrs/semester in the spring for any affiliated student. The program consists of the following benefits for the student leader:

- **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

Coaching emerged as a particularly high-impact component of the Newton Fellowship. As one participant described, “The coaching program fundamentally restructured my view of myself as a person,” while another noted the importance of “vulnerability and emotional intelligence within leadership.”

In the spring semester we paired 32 students with 22 coaches, with the 26 Newton Fellows receiving coaching, a total of 58 students were impacted through the program.

“The biggest insight that I learned about myself as a leader is the importance of vulnerability in a leadership context. I believe the best leaders can be vulnerable with their team, because it builds a deeper connection & trust.” - Coaching Student Participant

Wagner Family Initiative for Civic Impact



The **Wagner Family Civic Impact Initiative** is a new program, housed at the CFL, designed to bridge campus and community through student-led engagement and problem-solving. Supported by a \$5 million endowment gift from Heidi Wagner, the initiative is grounded in a simple but powerful idea: the challenges facing the city of Boulder don’t stop at the edge of campus, and neither should the solution.

Wagner Family Civic Impact Scholars will partner with local nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies to identify challenges and co-create innovative solutions. Along the way, students will gain hands-on experience, receive scholarships and mentorship, and contribute meaningful benefits to the community. The first cohort is expected to begin in fall 2026 with students from the Center for Leadership’s Newton Leadership Fellows Program.

The initiative reflects CU Boulder’s and Wagner’s shared belief that the campus and city are strongest when they work together, inviting students to help shape Boulder’s future while continuing a legacy of civic impact.

“I am beyond excited to launch the Wagner Family Civic Impact Initiative at a time when engagement, collaboration and action are sorely needed at all levels of government and community,” said Heidi Wagner. **“By working directly with the city of Boulder as well as local businesses and nonprofits, students will be given practical experience as well as an appreciation for complex, real-time problem-solving that benefits the Boulder community.”**



Read the full story on
CU Boulder Today!

GRADUATING LEADERS OF THE YEAR

The Center for Leadership recognized fourteen exceptional students with the 2026 Graduating Leaders of the Year Award, celebrating their impact across CU Boulder’s leadership programs and broader community. Nominated by their respective programs, these students were selected for their academic excellence, innovation in leadership initiatives,



- Melisa Arellano Ramirez** | Multicultural Leadership Scholars
- Jamison Barcelona** | Engineering Leadership Program
- Beauregard Cave** | Learning Assistant Program
- Autumn Christeson** | Leadership and Community Engagement - School of Ed
- Saylee Didolkar** | Engineering Management Program
- Luke Dry** | Scripps Leadership and Career for Student-Athletes
- Michael Ellis** | Air Force ROTC
- Sahithi Govardhanam** | Journey Leaders
- Sena Kavi** | Leeds Scholars Program
- Andrew Marsh** | Herd Leadership Council
- Kalen Sieja** | Presidents Leadership Class
- Sam Thompson** | Leeds Consulting Group
- Tvishi Yendamuri** | Dalai Lama Fellows
- CU Student Government Tri-Executives** | Camden Sharkey, John Masulit, & Gianna Guido

meaningful service, personal resilience, and their embodiment of the Colorado Creed. Representing a wide range of campus programs, the awardees reflect the breadth and diversity of leadership development at CU Boulder and the many ways students contribute to a thriving campus community. They were honored through campus-wide recognition at a men’s basketball game and formally celebrated at the Spring Leadership Summit, where they received their awards and shared reflections on their leadership journeys, impact, and future aspirations.



KNOWLEDGE

The Center for Leadership integrates research, theory, and assessment into practice to strengthen leadership development efforts. Programs are grounded in evidence-based approaches informed by leadership research, instructional design, and ongoing evaluation.

The CFL also shares leadership knowledge on campus and across the broader field. In summer 2025, CU Boulder partnered with the International Leadership Association (ILA) to host the Leadership Education Academy, a globally recognized professional development experience. During fall 2025, CFL staff presented four sessions at the ILA Global Conference in Prague.

The CFL also partners with undergraduate students on applied research projects, helping develop the next generation of leadership scholars and practitioners.

Leadership Publications & Presentations

Books & Book Chapters

- Riggio, R. E., & Johnson, S. K. (2026). Introduction to Industrial/Organizational Psychology (9th ed.). Routledge.
- Johnson, S. K., & Murphy, S. E. (2026). Developmental perspectives of leader identity across the life span. In The Oxford Handbook of Leadership, Followership, and Identity.

Journal Publications

- Pomerantz, A. L., Brown, R. P., & Johnson, S. K. (2026). Leadership as Development: Validating the Developmental Self-Concept Scale for Leaders. Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies.
- Sitzmann, T., Schwartz, S., Dwivedi, P., & Johnson, S. K. (2026). Equal pay, better performance: The organizational impact of gender pay equality and work-life balance. Human Resource Management.
- Lacerenza, C. N., Johnson, S. K., et al. (2025). Team diversity as a safety asset. Human Resource Management.
- Roy, E., et al. (2025). A content study to reduce discrimination in social judgment. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

Conference Presentations

- Follett, J. N., Murphy, S. E., Johnson, S. K., Coppett, T., & Coppett, T. (2025, October). Mentorship Models: Developing Future Leaders in Higher Education. Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Leadership Association. Prague.
- Follett, J.N., & Webb, S. (2025, October). Scaling Leadership Education: An Innovative Model for Collective Impact. Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Leadership Association. Prague.
- Follett, J.N. (2025, October). Scaling Leadership Education: An Innovative Model for Collective Impact. Presentation at the annual Colorado Leadership Practitioners Convening. Denver.

LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS

This year we worked on a research project in collaboration with CU Athletics examining the relationship between collegiate athletic participation and leadership competency development among student-athletes. Sage Adelman (undergraduate, Psychology) led the project. A literature review found that collegiate athletes often report stronger leadership skills than non-athletes, but that leadership growth is strongest when paired with intentional development opportunities.

We then conducted focus groups with CU student-athletes. Across interviews and discussions, athletes consistently emphasized confidence, emotional regulation, work ethic, accountability, communication, and adaptability as essential leadership traits. Athletes viewed leadership as critical to team success and described it as less about formal titles and more about modeling behavior, maintaining composure under pressure, and setting the tone for teammates through action.

We also explored how leadership develops over the collegiate experience. First-years described themselves as still learning how to lead within a new environment, while upperclassmen reported greater confidence and self-awareness as leaders. Athletes consistently highlighted resilience as one of the strongest skills developed through sports, particularly the ability to recover from setbacks, injuries, and performance challenges. Across sports, leadership under pressure was closely tied to emotional stability and the ability to provide confidence and reassurance during difficult moments.

Overall, the findings suggest that athletics can serve as a powerful context for leadership development when participation is paired with reflection, mentorship, and intentional practice. The study also highlights the value of expanding leadership opportunities beyond formal captaincy roles so that more students can develop as leaders.



KNOWLEDGE ILA LEA - Boulder, CO

In summer 2025, the Center for Leadership partnered with the International Leadership Association to host the 8th Leadership Education Academy (LEA) at CU Boulder. This globally recognized, immersive program brings together leadership educators from around the world to deepen their expertise in leadership theory, curriculum design, and innovative teaching practices through a highly interactive and cohort-based experience.

Through the CFL's A-LAB initiative, nine affiliate faculty and staff were sponsored to attend, with two additional CU Boulder educators participating independently. This investment expanded the university's capacity for high-quality, evidence-informed leadership education, equipping participants with new strategies, peer networks, and practical tools to strengthen leadership learning across campus.



ILA GLOBAL - Prague, CZ

Center for Leadership staff contributed to the global field of leadership education through active participation in the 27th annual International Leadership Association (ILA) Global Conference in Prague, Czechia, themed Leading Together. This premier international gathering convenes scholars, practitioners, and educators from around the world to advance leadership knowledge and practice.

CU Boulder was well represented, with multiple Center for Leadership team members presenting their work and sharing innovative models with a global audience. Dr. Seth Webb highlighted experiential learning through the River Conservation Leadership Expedition, while Chancellor Emeritus Philip DiStefano shared insights on CU Boulder's institution-wide approach to cultivating leadership. Jessi Follett and Dr. Webb co-presented on the Center's

scalable and impactful leadership development model, and Jessi Follett partnered with Dr. Stefanie Johnson and colleagues to present on mentorship models and their role in developing future leaders in higher education.



Through these contributions, the Center for Leadership continued to elevate CU Boulder's national and international profile in leadership education, while engaging in meaningful dialogue and knowledge exchange with peers across the globe.





THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PURPOSE.

LEADERSHIP IS WITHIN US ALL.



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