

A+ EDUCATION PROGRAMS | GOING DUTCH | FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE | THE LANDSCAPE OF K-12 | FALL 2021

# BEYOND

COLORADO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY



50<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
OF EDUCATOR PROGRAMS



COLORADO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY  
*Grace and Truth*

Dear friends,

As we approach Thanksgiving and Advent season, it's a great time to count our blessings and celebrate God's goodness at CCU this past year. We see His hand through the dedicated work of our staff and faculty. We see it in the prayers and support of our friends and alumni. We especially see it in the lives of our students and those who have recently graduated. Allow me to reflect on some of the milestones at CCU since the last edition of *BEYOND*.



In the spring, we graduated our largest class of students in the University's history. There were 1,329 degrees awarded to traditional undergraduate, adult undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students. The University also awarded its first doctoral degrees to graduates from our new Doctor of Nursing Practice program.

Despite the global pandemic, for the second year in a row, CCU offered in-seat instruction in our College of Undergraduate Studies program. We chose to remain open. And this fall we experienced our 12th consecutive year of record enrollments for a total of just over 9,000 students.

God has also blessed our efforts in Advancement to rebuild our campus. This past spring, through the faithful generosity of our alumni and friends, the University secured the funding to build the Armstrong Center. The center will be the signature building on campus and the academic heart of the University. It will be the new home for our School of Music, it will include a new expanded library and communications lab, and house a beautiful new chapel. We hope to break ground early in the new year.

The mission of transforming students to impact the world with grace and truth would not be possible without the unfailing dedication of our faculty and staff. In 2021, CCU was named one of the "best Christian workplaces" by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute. This recognition, based on employee survey data, was a first for the University. It serves as a testament to our commitment to build a strong Christ-centered community among those who work here.

In this edition of *BEYOND* we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first teacher education programs offered at our heritage institutions. For five decades we have prepared future leaders to serve as the hands and feet of Christ in the classroom. You will read how both the School of Education in the College of Undergraduate Studies and the School of Education Professions in the College of Adult and Graduate Studies continue to adapt in an ever-changing landscape to train and equip competent, committed, Christ-centered teachers.

As we get ready to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is appropriate to glance back with great thanksgiving for all that God has done at and through CCU. And it is appropriate to look forward as we anticipate the days ahead and await our Lord's return. As we do, will you please pray for your university — for staff and faculty as we seek to train a new generation of students, and for the students themselves, that their minds and hearts would be transformed and renewed during their studies, and that they would bear a powerful witness for Christ and His kingdom?

Yours in His service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Don Sweeting". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DONALD W. SWEETING, Ph.D.

President

Colorado Christian University

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# BEYOND

A publication of Colorado Christian University

## Our Magazine

In *BEYOND*, our goal is to share the story of CCU, as well as God's faithful provision for more than 100 years. We aim to share the stories of the people who go beyond and make CCU the great university it is today. Whether you're an alum or a friend, this magazine is designed for you, because your story, our story, His story, is meant to be told.



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## Mission

Christ-centered higher education transforming students to impact the world with grace and truth.

Colorado Christian University cultivates knowledge and love of God in a Christ-centered community of learners and scholars, with an enduring commitment to the integration of exemplary academics, spiritual formation, and engagement with the world. We envision graduates who think critically and creatively, lead with high ethical and professional standards, embody the character and compassion of Jesus Christ, treasure the gospel, and who thereby are prepared to impact the world in their callings.



## On the Cover

Amy Starnes '18, B.A. in Elementary Education with Licensure



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# News & Highlights

An overview of what's happening at CCU



## Chenyu Lin Awarded Hatfield Prize from the Center for Public Justice

CCU undergraduate Chenyu (Emily) Lin '23 was one of three college students from across the nation who was awarded the Hatfield Prize from the Center for Public Justice (CPJ). The Hatfield Prize, part of CPJ's Shared Justice initiative, awards funding to three student-faculty pairs from Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU) institutions to conduct research on a social policy that impacts the well-being of children, families, and communities.

Advised by Colorado Christian University Assistant Professor of Biology Julie Woodman, Ph.D., Lin, a sophomore nursing major, researched the ways Covid-19 exacerbated child health disparities in Denver. Through her research findings, Lin hopes to inspire community members, policymakers, leaders, and faith communities to take action in addressing children's health disparities and to improve the healthcare system to better support all children's healthcare needs.



## Best-Selling Author Jenkins to Serve as Chair of Creative Writing Program

The College of Adult and Graduate Studies at CCU recently launched the Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing degree program for the CCU Online fall 2021 term. Students in the 100% online program will learn under the tutelage of world-renowned, best-selling author Jerry B. Jenkins, who chairs the program and developed the curriculum. Jenkins has authored nearly 200 books with collective sales of more than 70 million copies, including the best-selling *Left Behind* series. Upon graduation, students in the B.A. in Creative Writing program will be prepared to pitch their own work to publishers and agents.

The new academic program will prepare graduates for careers in the literary field, being able to effectively communicate their calling in the secular and Christian marketplaces. Students in the program gain firsthand experience in numerous forms of writing while receiving expert insight and advice from experienced professors.



## CCU Ranked in Top 2% of Colleges for the 10th Consecutive Year

Colorado Christian University earned an "A" rating in the annual "What Will They Learn" report from the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) for the 10th consecutive year. To receive an "A" from ACTA's Council of Scholars, a school must require students to complete coursework in at least six of seven essential liberal arts and science disciplines, including composition, literature, foreign language, U.S. government or history, economics, mathematics, and natural science.

Schools that receive the highest ACTA rating must be committed to a well-constructed, rigorous core curriculum, teaching excellence, mentoring, research opportunities, reading groups, and support for extracurricular learning opportunities. CCU was one of only 24 universities out of 1,133 to earn a top grade for its rigorous core curriculum nationwide and one of only two in the state of Colorado, along with the Air Force Academy.



## CCU Launches Continuing Education Courses in Evangelism and Apologetics

A new continuing education program featuring more than 20 courses and four certificate options recently launched through the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics. The new program will provide pastors, ministry leaders, small groups, and individuals with the tools necessary to serve as more effective ambassadors for Jesus Christ. The 100% online, self-guided, and low-cost continuing education courses were designed by Lee Strobel, Mark Mittelberg, and other leading experts. The non-credit courses are designed to equip students to evangelize and spread the gospel message of Christ's love for the world.



## CCU Tops 9,000 Students, Marks 12th Consecutive Year of Enrollment Growth

For the first time in the University's 108-year history, enrollment has surpassed 9,000 students. A record-breaking class of just over 500 first-year students has pushed enrollment in the College of Undergraduate Studies (CUS) to more than 1,500 students for the first time, while the mostly online enrollment in the College of Adult and Graduate Students (CAGS) rose to 7,603. Within CAGS, total graduate student enrollment rose to a record 1,786. Both the College of Adult and Graduate Studies and the College of Undergraduate Studies experienced 6% growth from the previous year to notch the University's 12th consecutive year of record enrollment.



## University's First Graduating Class of Doctoral Students Honored

Commencement ceremonies this past spring celebrated the first-ever doctoral cohort in the history of the University. Six doctoral graduates earned their Doctor of Nursing Practice in Visionary Leadership, as part of CCU's largest graduating class to date, including 850 traditional undergraduate, adult undergraduate, and graduate students, participating in the ceremonies either in-person or online.



## CCU Named a Best Christian Workplace in National Employee Survey

Colorado Christian University was named one of the Certified Best Christian Workplaces of 2021 by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute (BCWI). CCU conducted its own employee survey for over a decade, with high overall satisfaction ratings. This year marked the University's first participation in the BCWI survey. The recognition is based on employee survey results evaluated by BCWI's FLOURISH Model: fantastic teams, life-giving work, outstanding talent, uplifting growth, rewarding compensation, inspirational leadership, sustainable strategy, and healthy communication. Honored organizations met the certification standard by receiving exemplary ratings from surveyed employees.

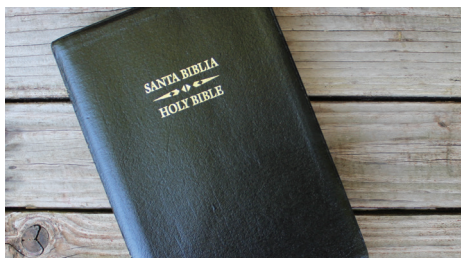
Employees of CCU live out the University's mission of "Christ-centered higher education transforming students to impact the world with grace and truth." Faculty and staff members are committed to integrating a faith-based academic model that positively impacts the culture and advances CCU's strategic priorities.



## CCU Climbs U.S. News & World Report 'Best Colleges' Rankings

Colorado Christian University continues to move up the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings of the best colleges and universities. CCU rises to No. 19 in undergraduate teacher preparation and No. 61 in regional universities in the West in the rankings released Sept. 13.

The No. 19 ranking for undergraduate teacher education is the highest ranking for the University since the School of Education's founding 50 years ago. The School of Education in the College of Undergraduate Studies and the School of Education Professions in the College of Adult and Graduate Studies train and equip students to serve as the next generation of teachers for both public schools and private Christian schools. Combined, the two schools serve more than 500 students.



## CCU Announces Spanish-language Biblical Studies Certificate Program

The first Spanish-language academic program, a Biblical Studies Certificate, is now available online through CCU's College of Adult and Graduate Studies. The accredited certificate was adapted from the English-language version of CCU's popular Biblical Studies Certificate and is taught in Spanish by professors in the School of Biblical and Theological Studies.

The 12-credit-hour certificate includes four required courses and one prerequisite composition course to ensure writing proficiency. The four primary courses offered are: Old Testament Introduction, New Testament Introduction, Biblical Interpretation, and Spiritual Formation. All classes are taught entirely online in Spanish, and students must be conversational in English in order to complete administrative processes. In addition, three credit hours (or the equivalent) of transfer credit may be used toward the certificate.



## CCU Announces \$6M Donation for Science Center Campaign

Jump-starting the drive for a permanent home for the School of Science and Engineering in the College of Undergraduate Studies, CCU excitedly received a \$6 million lead donation to the Science Center Capital Campaign. The gift, made by a donor who wishes to remain anonymous, is the second largest in the University's 108-year history.

The \$6 million donation will serve as the catalyst for the February 2022 launch of the Science Center Capital Campaign to fund the construction of a state-of-the-art academic facility for the rapidly expanding School of Science and Engineering. This gift will help the University prepare competent, ethical leaders for the health, sciences, engineering, and education fields.



## CCU Ranks Among Fastest-Growing Institutions for 6th Consecutive Year

For the sixth consecutive year, CCU has been named the fifth-fastest-growing college or university in the nonprofit, master's degree-granting category in *The Chronicle of Higher Education's Almanac of Higher Education*. The Almanac ranking is based on data from fall head counts of full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate students at private, nonprofit, master's degree-granting institutions with at least 500 students. In the 10 years ending in 2019 — the most recent year for which data is available — the University experienced 202% growth in enrollment.

CCU's exponential enrollment growth coincides with the University's expansion of undergraduate and graduate degrees. The College of Undergraduate Studies now offers more than 100 academic programs in business, liberal arts, music, sciences, and pre-professional studies on campus, while the College of Adult and Graduate Studies offers more than 100 undergraduate and graduate programs for adult students, with over 95% available entirely online.

# HONORING YOU AND YOUR GENEROSITY

*“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in **honor**.”*  
– Romans 12:10 (NASB)

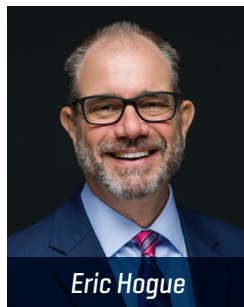
When you serve the Colorado Christian University higher education mission in the Office of University Advancement, you are often asked to ‘talk to CCU’s mission and growth.’ This opportunity is a blessing — especially when you consider God’s favor displayed upon this distinct and compelling Christ-centered university.

At the same time, the staff and I often come away from donor engagements wanting more time to listen versus answering questions and, well, talking. As donor advisors we have a great desire to hear more about your intentions in giving through CCU, as we have a serious desire to never assume your philanthropic experience, donor intentions, and ultimate outcome goals.

So, we are intentional in asking you a few survey questions and making certain we listen intently to honor you and your responses.

When tech entrepreneur Travis Kalanick founded Uber, he envisioned an elite black-car service that he could rely on. Kalanick combined the technology of GPS and luxury of personal drivers. With the Uber app, users always knew where the car was, who was driving, and how long before it arrived at their destination.

Lyft arrived on the scene answering the demands of people who wanted the reliability, safety, and visibility of Uber, but



didn’t need the exclusivity of a black car.

At that point, Kalanick had a choice to make. He could continue to be myopically committed to what he desired, what he

liked, and what he thought was the pathway forward, or he could expand his view, listen to the masses, and include app share riders of all means and desires.

CCU Advancement is not a “black-car service” for a select few donors, it’s a department constructed to be a vehicle of philanthropy for all generous passengers, drivers, and mission partners. We understand that, as a mission-focused CCU donor, you have a God-given GPS for your donations, a distinct pathway you want to travel for an outcome that you believe is vital for today’s Christian college student, cultural leaders, and Christ-centered higher education.

Why do I bring up Kalanick?

Because he did exactly what you — as a CCU donor — are asking of us. You want us to listen to you and provide philanthropic vehicles that travel your generous donations through CCU for a distinct outcome that delivers a lasting impact.

CCU doesn’t want to assume, guess, or decide for you on how your donations should be used to enhance the vital mission of Colorado Christian University. We want to respect you as a generous University partner,

trusting you know best about how to utilize your philanthropy, how you want to receive University communications, how you want to be receipted, thanked, and connected throughout the year.

Philanthropy is not a one-size-fits-all reality. You are an individual — you are distinct, unique, and greatly respected. The days of disconnected, impersonal fundraising are gone. It is time to be responsive to your God-given philanthropic passion(s), and to be mindful of a respectful philanthropic experience when partnering with CCU’s Christ-centered higher education mission.

*Please scan the QR code to complete a brief survey about how we can better serve you and the University’s mission.*



You can also complete the survey at <https://bit.ly/31B20ZC>.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Hogue'.

Eric Hogue, MATS  
Vice President  
Office of University Advancement

*“Responsive Fundraising,”* authors Gabe Cooper and McKenna Bailey, Liberalis Publishers, 2019.



# Going Dutch

From CCU to teaching in the Netherlands and beyond — how education is paving the way for this Fulbright Scholar in the mission field

Since the time Madelyn Van Kooten '20 was three years old, her mother knew that this determined, devoted daughter with a Christ-like heart for people was destined for mission work. From trips to Thailand at the age of 14 to expeditions in Israel, missions trips with her family and church throughout her growing up years inspired Van Kooten to explore the possibilities found in overseas mission work. These service opportunities abroad ultimately pointed her toward a degree in teaching secondary English through Colorado Christian University to be used in the mission field. However, a golden opportunity to teach in the Netherlands, despite a global pandemic, opened the door for more possibilities in education than this Fulbright Scholar could have ever imagined.

Through her early exposures to the mission field, Van Kooten knew she desired a skill that would be helpful to people globally. As she clarified her call to mission work over the years, she said, “I wanted a skill I could bring to the table, a skill that I could bring into the mission field in addition to caring for people.”

She was immediately drawn to opportunities abroad found in education, “English education was a very marketable skill and very much needed in countries outside the U.S. for people who want to learn English.”



*Madelyn Van Kooten '20  
B.A. English, Secondary Education*

Colorado Christian University had the winning combination of a Christ-centered focus to education in conjunction with a secondary education program. CCU immediately became Van Kooten’s top pick of universities.

A homeschool graduate dedicated to her studies, Van Kooten graduated from CCU in three years. While she did not have time for study abroad opportunities through the University, she participated in short-term trips in both high school and college. “I went to Israel twice in high school and fell in love with the Middle East; I originally wanted to go to Lebanon. In college, I went there to

teach English to Syrian refugees for a month over the summer, but I had really severe allergic reactions while there.”

God appeared to be closing the door in this direction, as a visit to a food allergist in the U.S. revealed that Van Kooten suddenly had a long list of things she had not been allergic to before, and all items that were integrated into the food and fabric of Middle Eastern culture.

Close to college graduation, Van Kooten began researching other places where she could serve Muslims, which is where her heart was leading in missions. She

set her sights on Europe and found the organization, Pioneers, and committed to serving with it. However, the timing for serving with this organization would need to be adjusted: Van Kooten had applied with the Fulbright program to be an English Teaching Assistant (ETA) in the Netherlands. And with the guidance of one of her CCU professors, Dr. Janet Black (who was also a Fulbright Scholar) helping her navigate the application and interview process, in March 2020, just before graduation, Van Kooten discovered that she had received the Fulbright grant. She delayed her service with Pioneers for a year, as she embraced the opportunity to teach English in the Netherlands.

The ETA programs place Fulbright award winners in overseas classrooms to simultaneously serve as cultural ambassadors for the U.S. while providing support to the local English teachers in the country. Though a different experience from a mission trip, the opportunities for living out your faith through your character and care in a different culture remain. Van Kooten specifically chose the Netherlands for her teaching experiences because of her Dutch family heritage, and as a fourth-generation American, she wanted to experience the Dutch culture for herself. She quickly learned, however, that Dutch culture and Dutch-American culture are two very different things. In preparation for her teaching experiences, Van Kooten studied Dutch for about a year-and-a-half consistently. She researched the culture online as well, and she reiterates that studying the culture is definitely not the same as living it. “The majority of your experiences in any teaching abroad situation are going to be just living in that culture and teaching as an aspect of that.”

This mission-minded educator not only experienced the people and places of the Netherlands through her teaching travels, she also experienced the international effects of travel and teaching through a pandemic.

While she had the original intention of an August start to her yearlong teaching program in the Netherlands, her Dutch adventures were postponed until January 2021, so she was only permitted to experience the latter half of the program due to lockdowns involved with the global pandemic.

*“English education was a very marketable skill and very much needed in countries outside the U.S.”*

“I had to jump through many hoops to get there at all, including traveling to New York to get my visa before I could fly to the Netherlands,” Van Kooten said. “It definitely was intense to travel during Covid. But it was also definitely worth it.”

The Fulbright scholar was stationed in Almelo, a small town in the east of Holland, two hours from Amsterdam, where the Fulbright program partners with local schools. The quaint Dutch village with a castle found at its core would be an idyllic setting typically for any teaching abroad experience. However, the country was in lockdown throughout her stay, and just like the rest of the world, she found her first days there lonely and isolating in a highly unusual teaching situation. She immediately set to teaching online at the beginning of the semester, but celebrated the transition to in-person teaching in the classroom over the course of her experience and loved connecting with the students.

Van Kooten learned to navigate the challenges of teaching through a pandemic at the same time as learning a completely different educational experience.

“The Dutch school system is very different from in the U.S.,” Van Kooten said. “Students decide at 12 years of age whether they are planning on traveling the college route or taking a more vocational path — theoretical

or practical schooling. They have many different vocational programs students can go into.” She appreciated the many choices students were offered in the Netherlands, targeting individual student strengths.

“While no educational system is perfect, I appreciated the opportunities students were allowed, as this could help a lot of students who might not fit the typical high school mold; students could pick a path but they could also change direction.”

A hotel management program was just one option that vocational students were afforded in Almelo, and that is where Van Kooten assisted as an ETA.

“I was placed in the vocational school’s brasserie — an informal café in the school. There, students worked with a teacher overseeing their placements in hotels. My job was to teach the students English in order for them to help customers in a very international setting. I co-taught many classes with the main English teacher ... which was super challenging because of the varying levels of English fluency.”

Even more challenging than the international studies classes she taught were the remedial English classes.

“It was hard because their English wasn’t good, and my Dutch was worse than their English!” However, she found opportunities for growth in it all. “It was a matter of working through it and having patience with them and patience with myself. It was good.”

Despite the language barriers encountered in the classroom and in the town itself, Van Kooten was surprised by how similar the culture of the Netherlands is to that of the U.S. She recounts that while living in a different culture can be very lonely (as most spoke Dutch), Van Kooten says she had a few phrases she could get by on in Almelo and was blessed by the friendships she made throughout her Dutch adventures. One of the many highlights of her experience



Madelyn Van Kooten '20  
B.A. English, Secondary Education

teaching overseas was the church community she was able to find.

“We met online, then in person, and the meeting in person was so special because of the unique pandemic situation. The church became super international — I now have Christian friends from the Philippines and Brazil — a super cool experience I would not have had living in the suburbs of Denver.”

When asked if she would recommend this type of teaching experience to teachers who may be considering a similar overseas opportunity, Van Kooten advises, “It definitely grows you as a person and as an educator; travel in general grows you as a person. However, teaching while traveling gives you new eyes for the U.S. education system, but also for students in general and how you can build relationships with them; it is much more challenging to build relationships cross-culturally. So, in coming

back to the U.S. classroom, teaching abroad would definitely give you more perspective.”

Van Kooten credits the incredible opportunities she had during her field experiences through CCU’s secondary education program as preparing her with the tools she needed to teach in any setting.

“My degree is secondary education English, and is almost a double major, because you have all the education classes as well as in the specific subject you will teach,” Van Kooten. “What sets CCU apart is the intention of getting you in the classroom, the field program where you have three semesters in a classroom before you start student teaching at the secondary level — which is not common in an education program. Student teaching, to me, is the most valuable piece

of the education program. The reason why I chose CCU was because of their secondary education program and the outstanding field experiences they provide. All of my courses prepared me in my career, but those teaching concepts are transferrable, and they helped me grow in my faith as well.”

In looking back, she appreciates how much her student teaching experiences and her CCU professors helped prepare her in many ways for classrooms in any setting.

From her own experiences, Van Kooten encourages prospective global teachers to go into international experiences with an open mind. “You can study and prepare as much as you want, but the experience is probably going to be completely different than anything you could have expected. So, be flexible and learn as much as you can, but don’t beat yourself up for the things you fail at or struggle with because you’re still going to grow despite the challenges you face in that experience.” She smiles, adding, “And that’s just solid life advice in general.”

Next up for Van Kooten — more international teaching. This time she is off to England, excited and ready to go through a missions organization, teaching at an international language school, specifically working with refugees and asylum seekers who have moved to the U.K. Again, she will rest in her CCU experiences and time teaching in the Netherlands, teaching ESL, “But this time it will be British English; so it will be interesting.”

While she acknowledges there will be a few differences, she is hopeful it may be easier living in an English-speaking culture. For this first trip, she will be gone for five months as a trial to see if that is where God is calling her. If she feels at peace and it feels like a good fit, Van Kooten could stay in England long-term. With her teaching time in the Netherlands now under her belt, the CCU grad looks forward to sharing her God-given gifts wherever in the world He leads her to next.



# EDUCATION PROGRAM

50 YEARS OF LEADING WITH EXCELLENCE

With an A-rating from the National Council on Teacher Quality and accolades at both the state and national level, Colorado Christian University not only inspires future educators to become teachers of influence and impact, but equips and prepares future educators who will go the distance. The future is bright at CCU's School of Education, and it is just getting started.

Who was the educator that had the biggest impact on your life? That is the reflective question posed each year to Professor John Borman's field I class. For better or worse, the question elicits an immediate response from each of us. What is profound about this question is that when Borman's secondary education students reflect upon their replies, the fact is obvious that educators make a significant difference, relationships matter, and each one of us has been impacted by at least one, if not many, over the course of our life.

This spring, CCU celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first teacher education program — it is the celebration of the University's dedication and journey to training up

generations with a call to the noblest profession. Teachers connect us — to content and ideas, to the curiosities in the world around us, and more importantly to each other. Good teachers illuminate giftings or callings within us that are sitting dormant. Great teachers point us to Jesus through quiet ways that speak loudly of Him. While academics and content expertise are at the forefront of the program's success, School of Education Replace with: faculty, staff, and students in the School of Education at CCU's College of Undergraduate Studies agree that the three Rs of *relationship, rigor, and real-life experiences* are what set CCU apart. And that, to quote Robert Frost, has made all the difference.



## RELATIONSHIP IS EVERYTHING

The landscape of education looks very different from the early days of CCU, and preparing students looks quite different than when it began 50 years ago. CCU's education programs have grown to include teacher preparation in elementary education, secondary education, special education, K-12 music education, and most recently K-12 Physical Education licensure.

Dr. Priscilla Wright has seen the education programs at CCU evolve considerably since joining the University 32 years ago, with a more pronounced evolution within the last five years. Wright, an expert in elementary-level diagnostic reading, teaches numerous elementary education courses and specializes in training special education students. Her warm and welcoming demeanor is like a hug to one's spirit upon meeting her. The Illinois native personifies the prominence of relationships in teaching to and through changes and challenges that face educators.

"1989 was my first year at CCU, and I didn't think I was going to stay here long," Wright said. "I started when my children were just one and four years old. But I love the students; I love the faculty; I love the staff; I love everything about CCU. And all of a sudden, it's been 32 years later."

According to Wright, the relational learning environment has been a key feature in setting the University's education program apart from other colleges. "The professors make a difference — we're all dedicated. Not only are the faculty knowledgeable about the latest developments in the profession, but we all truly care about the students. We help them navigate their classes and how to get a job; we show them how to navigate student teaching."

Being a smaller university is a strength, with a student teacher ratio of 14:1. “We’re small, and we know everybody, and we care. We work with individuals, not numbers. We work hard not to let anyone slip through the cracks,” Wright said. “And I think work has to be fun ... and this is a fun place.”

The students at CCU are what make teaching fun for many of the University’s faculty and staff. And while the relationships built with her students have remained a consistent joy throughout the course of her career, it was family relationships that first introduced Wright to teaching, helping her own mother in the classroom.

“My mother was a master teacher. My sister was a master teacher. Education ran in the family,” Wright said. “I would help my mother in the classroom and I saw what she did, and I would take small groups when I got older and listen to kids read. I really enjoyed it. I liked working with the kids, I liked the profession, I liked the sense that you could see where you made a difference when students were making progress on a daily basis. Maybe not great strides, but you could see where you made a difference in a child’s life.”

Wright passes that encouragement on to her own students as they work toward their degree.

Making a difference in young people’s lives was a major reason Associate Professor of Education John Borman entered the field of education. Shortly after college with a teaching license in K-12 physical education in hand, Borman became a police officer in Greeley, Colo. His experiences on patrol and investigations reminded Borman of his call to teach and gave him new resolve to become involved with kids *before* they got in trouble instead of after. He went back to school for his English degree and became a high school English teacher, opening the door to a rewarding adventure through countless facets of education (including athletic director, assistant principal, principal, and district superintendent) for his 30 years and counting. After 16 years of administrative work in education, which he loved for the different challenges and perspectives gained, Borman is enjoying his return to the classroom and the relationships that are built there.



Dr. Priscilla Wright  
Professor of Education, College of Undergraduate Studies - School of Education

## History of Education Programs at CCU

- In 1947, Denver Bible College, CCU’s foundation school, offered three majors: Bible, English, or Social Sciences. Bible training programs were to help people become Christian educators.
- 1971, Rockmont College starts first teacher education program.
- 1973, Gene Marlatt developed adult education programs at CCU’s predecessor Rockmont College, a primary reason the school survived.
- 1975, Rockmont began an education certification program for undergraduates.
- In 1979, Western Bible College, another heritage institution to CCU, started a Christian teacher education program.
- In 1982, Rockmont College began offering accelerated adult education courses on weekends and evenings instead of simply the traditional semesters.
- In 1984, Rockmont and Western Bible College merged and offered education majors in music, elementary ed., and teaching assistance as well as a teacher recertification.
- In 1993, the Colorado Board of Education approved a major in secondary education.

“I love the interactions in the classroom and especially working with this age group. [Students] are confident, but they’re also scared to death at the same time,” Borman said. “Most of these kids have been in school from kindergarten through high school, and the thought of adulting is exciting and scary. It’s truly a time of transitions, and it’s fun to be a part of that. We prepare them for the school piece of it, but we also prepare them for growing into adulthood.”

For Borman, the emphasis on relationship building sets CCU’s School of Education apart from other universities. “We have staff with great experience. One of the most important aspects is the Christian piece, but it’s also that we’re small. The kids cannot be anonymous here. You’re going to be known. I think it’s such a strength, and that’s part of the difference here.”

Borman is an example of a teacher of influence in many students’ lives, cited as a favorite CCU professor by recent CCU graduate and Fulbright scholar Madelyn Van Kooten ’20. Van Kooten’s personal observations of CCU’s unique differences

resonate largely with Borman’s nod to the exemplary staff, the Christian community, and the relationships formed from those two pieces combined. As she was touring colleges her senior year of high school, in search of a Christian college with a secondary education program, CCU quickly became her top choice, largely due to the Christian community life on campus, the smaller class sizes, and the personalized placements found in the School of Education’s field experiences.

“Living in Christian community provided one of the biggest ways for my faith to grow. As students are growing as people and as adults when they enter college, to be in community with strong, positive influences in your life is really important,” Van Kooten said. “You connect with those people in your major, and especially the people you student-teach with — you become super close.”

And learning to student-teach senior year in the midst of a pandemic only made those relationships stronger.

“With teaching online, you had to grow closer,” Van Kooten said.

Tamara Bultje, associate professor of education and teacher practicum coordinator, noted the bond between students brought about by their dedication of teaching through a global pandemic in a most unusual school year.

“Student teachers carpooled together to drive out to rural areas to work with students. And all of our student teachers had experiences teaching remotely — many Zoomed in with their classes for field time access to their students, many times leading breakout-session small groups virtually; however, as long as a school was open, our students would be in-person,” Bultje said.

The professors’ own dedication to serving their students was contagious more than ever through pandemic teaching, guiding their students through it all. However, the relationships between students and professors is a permanent fixture at CCU. Students stay in contact with their instructors long after graduation, with many alumni brought back each year to the School of Education to speak to graduating seniors.

Bultje noticed the CCU difference and the relationships at the school when first touring the campus as a parent with her own children who were prospective elementary education students. Bultje was no stranger to the field of education, having taught every grade from kindergarten through eighth in both public and Christian schools, as well as having served as a high school guidance counselor, and later as a principal. From the unique vantage point of both an educator and principal, as well as coming to the school through the eyes of a parent, Bultje knew a strong program when she saw it. She immediately grew enamored by the School of Education and the community and relationships being fostered within it, and came on board to share her expertise with CCU’s students shortly after.

“It’s fun to teach young, aspiring teachers. Our classes are small and we know all of our students by name. We teach our



Tamara Bultje  
CUS School of Education Associate Professor and Clinical Practicum Coordinator



John Borman  
CUS School of Education Associate Professor

students to love well and do their job with excellence. We want our students to become experts in their content but also experts in relationships,” Bultje said. “They are being Jesus’ hands and feet in the classroom; we encourage that in your kindness you are living out your faith. We remind our students that they are teaching eternal beings and want them to see each of their own students as a child of God.”

While Bultje teaches mostly elementary education students, at the secondary level, Borman also emphasizes building up a strong relationship in the Lord as key. “As Christians, what does it mean to be a believer in the public sector? That’s where I think it’s most important to be — but you better be grounded. You better know your identity if you’re going to do that so that we (as educators) can bring a positive light — Jesus — into those environments without being preachy or condemning, just bringing light. Because in the public sector you have to navigate that carefully.”

Borman said they often discuss what that looks like to be Jesus’ hands and feet in the

public-school classroom. “We talk about the question: ‘What do we think Jesus would be like as a middle school teacher?’ Almost all of my students talk about how He would be with the kids; He would just love them; He would see through behavior and really see them. And kids always respond to that,” Borman said. “We talk about that for quite a while and then discuss ‘Who are we in the midst of that?’ Those are the same qualities that can be in you because *He’s* in you; so, what are we bringing to the public classroom? Almost none of my students believe that Jesus would bore anybody, but the kids would be immediately attracted to Him and that He would create meaning in whatever the subject is He was teaching, and He would make connections. Then we ask ourselves, ‘How do we become that type of teacher?’”

Going back to Borman’s original question of the educator who made the biggest impact on their lives, Borman cites relationships as the critical link to becoming that type of teacher. “After they’ve each written their paper, we start looking at the attributes. *What made that person most significant?* And

then we talk about that. Almost never is it the academic rigor — for most of them, it’s about relationship. Most of the time it’s ‘that’s the person who made me think about being a teacher because they saw me. They recognized who I am, they spent time with me when I needed it, or they reached out and recognized a gift in me that I didn’t even know that I had’ — it’s things like that. And then we talk: most papers have the same traits in them, most always about relationship. We talk about how as you connect with the kids, *that’s the reason you get up in the morning. And that hasn’t changed.* We try to emphasize that with them. No one gets up in the morning because they can’t wait for that state assessment.”

## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

While nurturing relationships are paramount for the School of Education, academic excellence is not on the backburner. Aside from the relationship-building, Christian worldview, and the preciousness of life that is woven into all courses, other unique features that set CCU’s program apart from other universities are its unique liberal arts focus and pursuit of academic rigor. Elementary education students graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts with an endorsement for K-6 Elementary Education and K-12 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) education with emphases in biblical studies, English, reading, and social studies. A classical education track is also available. Graduates are eligible to apply for a Colorado initial teacher license with endorsements after graduation and upon completion of the associated exams.

Students in the secondary education program complete a bachelor’s degree in the content area they desire to teach (English language arts, math, science, or social studies) and receive an endorsement in education. Following graduation, students are eligible to apply for secondary education licensure.

## HOW, WHAT, AND WHY TO TEACH

Dean and Professor of Education, Dr. Debora Scheffel explains, “One of the benefits of a liberal arts degree is the fact that (teachers) should have good content knowledge. Critics of teacher-prep programs argue that teachers focus all their time on *how* to teach and they don’t necessarily focus on *what* to teach. So, we want to make sure they know what to teach and how to teach, and then from a Christian perspective *why* to teach. We hit those three because we want our students, when they enter their classrooms, to be able to teach their own students the skills and knowledge and content, so they can be seekers of truth. I think that’s unique to CCU because most secular teacher-prep programs don’t have that perspective on *why* to teach.” The “why” is what keeps teachers teaching.

Regarding content, Scheffel continues, “*What* to teach means that we want our graduates to have a really deep content understanding of math if they’re teaching math, or reading if they’re teaching reading, or science, or social studies, etc. We’re living in a world where agnosticism has infiltrated education in a sense of ‘Well, there is no truth, and we don’t really know what kids need to know; things are always changing, so we’re not really going to focus on the *what* to teach so much — let’s just focus on the process.’ And that can really lead to a major problem we have currently in our country, which is compromised levels of literacy and math facility and writing. We want to be part of the solution to that problem.”

Aside from addressing problems with basic math and literacy skills, one of the biggest challenges Wright has seen over the years related to achievement gaps in learning is teaching through language barriers.

“Our education students are placed (for field work) in schools that are bilingual, and they’re also placed in Title I schools that are the reading specialist schools. We purposely

place our students in schools where there’s bilingual education. That is a main challenge we have today — we have kids where English is not their primary language — how are you going to teach them? How are you going to intervene? What kinds of programs are available? What kinds of assessments are available?” Wright said.

One of the ways CCU has met this challenge is with its Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) endorsement that elementary education students earn through their coursework.

Scheffel speaks into this challenge facing educators as well. “We place our students in Title I schools (for field work), because having English as a second language can be a risk, simply because the tests that the state gives to track achievement and achievement gaps are given in English, so we want students to be able to master that language, and also maintain their native language if they want to, mastering English opens up opportunities for them in this culture where English is the dominant language. So, all of our elementary education students receive the CLD endorsement if they’re in elementary education unless they choose the classical track.”

In each of the education programs at CCU, helping teachers hone the tools they need to tackle challenges and draw out the best from their students is another key difference found in the University’s School of Education.

“A large part of it is about excellence. And I talk to the kids about that — to be a believer in the classroom is an amazing privilege and responsibility, but so is excellence,” Borman said. “To be the very best that we can be, what does that look like? It’s learning how to put together a good lesson, learning how to be involved with professional development, learning how to be a good employee, and having the ambition to be a master teacher. And I think we do that well here.”

## REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES

One of the exceptional ways that CCU equips future teachers is through the amount of field work students experience.

**That experience, coupled with access to a variety of classroom settings and types of schools, distinguishes CCU’s School of Education from other universities in major ways.**

“One of our education program’s unique features is that the state requires 800 hours in the field for our students, and we meet or exceed that, but we want that to be punctuated throughout the program — we don’t want our students to be taking all their field work during their student-teaching their senior year, because by then it’s kind of late to be figuring out what they want and if teaching is going to be a good fit,” Scheffel said. “We get them in the field the beginning of their freshmen or sophomore year, depending on the program (elementary field work begins freshman year; sophomore year for secondary education students). We want them to have a variety of experiences throughout their program, so they know if they want to teach in a charter school or have a classical charter school experience; do they want traditional public school, Christian private school — where’s their sweet spot? We have those as options with our partner relationships with schools, so if they’d like to be in a classical charter, we can find that placement; if they want traditional public schools, they can try that; we have relationships with Faith Christian and other Christian schools, such as Denver Christian schools — we have all these





relationships that are *huge* to the success of the program.”

Another advantage of dividing field work between all four years is the confidence-building that happens along the way. During the first year of the elementary education program, students are supervised as they enter partner schools and work one-on-one or in small groups.

“It’s first semester, so it’s great to test out and see — if you like it, keep going; if not, you’ll know,” Wright said. “Hands-on, first-year experiences give students the confidence they need, going up the ladder one step at a time.”

Sophomore year begins field 2 in the elementary education program, or for students in the secondary education program, this year begins field 1, allowing students just graduating high school time to mature and gain content knowledge before heading back into a classroom filled with students close to their own age (although typically a student’s first secondary field experience is with middle school students).

“We do get (our secondary students) in there their sophomore year, and they have different opportunities to try out different subjects, ensuring they are really strong in their content area,” Scheffel said. “It’s a matter of content expertise, and then being well-versed in the pedagogy, as well.”

Third-year College of Undergraduate Studies education students spend two days a week in the classroom. On occasion, these students may be asked to take over the whole class, but they are supervised through it all, never left alone. And then the final in-class opportunity is the student teaching experience senior year, where students are teaching in a classroom the full 16-week semester, taking over the class all day, every day.

The School of Education not only offers students opportunities to go into the schools for real-life learning, but children are also

## ROSANNA LINDEMAN

B.A. Elementary Education



Meeting for coffee to discuss her experiences at CCU is a full-circle moment for Rosanna Lindeman, homeschooling mother of three and educational entrepreneur. It was

over a cup of joe, 20 years ago, Lindeman met with an enrollment counselor to discuss CCU’s evening and weekend classes (an innovative concept before online courses).

Newly divorced and new to the Gospel, Lindeman asked, “What do I do with my life, Lord?” Hearing a radio commercial advertising CCU’s weekend and evening adult studies program, Lindeman recounts, “I remember feeling, ‘Well, my life is pretty much at building block no. zero right now... why not?’”

Lindeman called CCU, met with an enrollment counselor, and discussed possibilities for finishing her degree. Lindeman remembers thinking, “Wow! An adult studies program where I can still work and feed myself — and go to school? It was a HUGE blessing!”

So began Lindeman’s back-to-school adventures, completing weekend and evening courses in the midst of a busy life, working toward elementary licensure. She shares, “It was a very positive experience; the student teaching was invaluable and the professors were especially excellent. I liked that many of them were teaching at CCU while simultaneously teaching full time in elementary education, so they were current in everything they taught — not five years

ago in the classroom or 10 years ago when they were administrating.”

Within a few short years, Lindeman earned her elementary education licensure. She enjoyed teaching fourth grade until the birth of her first child when she decided to use her teaching gifts homeschooling. As her family grew, Lindeman grew in skills as well, especially in the area of teaching dyslexic learners. With two children diagnosed as dyslexic, she immersed herself into understanding, equipping, and empowering dyslexic learners. Lindeman explains, “I had been using an Orton-Gillingham-based curriculum to help my own dyslexic children learn how to read and spell with success over all those years of homeschooling. Over time, I felt God saying, ‘What if you started tutoring dyslexic kiddos? Here out of the house...on your own schedule.’ So, I dipped my toe in and did one small step at a time, and God would meet me there.”

And so, in October 2018, Eureka Tutoring was born. Lindeman said, “Literally, no sooner had I launched, a gal from our church said, ‘Get out of town! My son was just diagnosed with dyslexia, and I need a tutor, like yesterday — when can you start?’ And with just one student, I started, and now I’m at capacity! It’s been such an amazing journey!” Lindeman shares, “I love what I do! I get to empower dyslexic learners to know that they are brilliant.”

While CCU’s programs for adult learners have now graduated to online platforms, Lindeman does not forget the blessing of those original educational options to help her get to where she is today. “God really paved the way for me through CCU. I was so grateful. I still am.”



Dr. Cammie Gray  
CUS School of Education Associate Professor

taught on the CCU campus within controlled learning environments as well.

“Another distinctive at CCU is that we feel the *how-to-teach* piece is sometimes harder to control because when we go into a public school we are guests, and so we wanted to enhance our methods courses (courses where you learn how to teach). Always adapting and changing our programs to consistently improve, we’re initiating a plan where we bring young children K-8/K-6 on campus to work with our teaching students for part of the semester during methods courses,” Scheffel said. “It’s not just learning decontextualized, theoretical information about how to teach math — they’re learning some of that the first part of the class — and then we’re bringing kids onto campus where they can try that out and they critique each other, working in pairs. The younger kids benefit because they essentially get tutoring, we get them on campus which exposes them to CCU, and then our teacher candidates get real experience with real children as they’re learning these methodologies.

“We are also working toward new and improved opportunities for our students to see different types of programs tested out with students. We are working toward possibilities with The Inclusive Higher

Education Initiative, where we will be able to bring developmentally delayed children on campus and ask our students who are in the special education program to mentor them.”

The same holds true for secondary students working in special education. At the secondary level, hands-on experiences in the special education program turn more toward helping with transitions to adult life.

“We have lots of special speakers; we take the students on field trips to Warren Tech to work with developmentally delayed students as they help them in working a job and learning job skills,” Scheffel said. “If we believe in the preciousness of life, regardless of disability, our focus should be: How can we help these students have a meaningful life after high school? We’re trying to focus on transition. We help our special education students help their students transition from high school to life, providing a meaningful opportunity to engage. We want to help our students see that what they do on a day-to-day basis helps students with disabilities face life with something to offer, something that means something to them.”

Faculty and staff share the same heart to help future teachers prepare for the transition to the classroom.

“We have panels come in; we have principals come in that give mock interviews. We actually have a lot of students who are hired before student teaching is over if they want to work at that same school,” Wright said. “We have about a 90% placement rate in the public schools. The other 10% often go into missionary work or a church school or a private school or private Christian school. We prepare them for those opportunities.”

Preparing students to make sure that a fit for a teaching position is mutual is just another key to ensuring long-term success in the field.

“Part of what we do in the student teacher seminar is to really start preparing them for the interview process and how to look for a school that’s a good fit for them. We work on resumes and interview skills,” Borman said. “Especially with the critical need for special education teachers — because they’re all going to have options — the kids so much at this stage really want to be hired, but we advise them that they need to make sure that a school is a good fit for them. Just because someone offers you a job doesn’t mean that you have to say yes.”



## KNOW YOUR WHY

The paramount piece to ensuring longevity in the field of education, however, is remembering the bigger picture of a missional mindset. While simultaneously learning the *what* and *how* of teaching, CCU education students are also encouraged to know their *why*. Remembering *why* to teach is critical to an educator's long-term success. Preparing students for success in the classroom goes beyond a five-year plan at CCU, with emphasis placed on how to not grow weary in the workplace.

"We're at such a unique time because there's a lot of burnout in all areas of education," Borman said. "Teachers had to navigate going to online instruction, then last year it was hybrid models — some online/some in class. It would change every week. Sometimes teachers found the students online were not as engaged, and now we're finding there was a gap in the learning that's the effect of two different school years."

"There's a high frustration in terms of trying to figure out where the gaps are for the kids who were checked out, and unfortunately the kids in poorer areas had the biggest gap," Borman said. "They didn't have the technology or they just weren't supervised, so they would turn off computers. A lot of veteran teachers are looking to get out of the system right now."

However, the crisis of teacher shortages, burnout, and turnover is the fuel of rich discussions in preparing future teachers for longevity in the field. Borman tells his students two things to encourage their outlook in the profession and opening the doors to discussion:

1. You're going to have a lot of opportunity.
2. Let's talk about why many teachers are burning out and why you don't have to.

CCU's faculty work hard to equip students

to teach with excellence, know their content, and to remember their "why."

"You have to learn to be good at paperwork, you have to learn to be good at preparation, you have to learn to be good at state assessments — the things that drive most teachers crazy," Borman said. "We tell them to learn how to be good at those things, but that's not why you get up in the morning. *Don't forget that you're there to serve kids.* Don't forget you are there because you're going to impact lives. And that hasn't changed throughout time. Some of the expectations and duties of teachers have changed, but not the ability to have a tremendous impact on kids."

Scheffel encourages prospective teachers to also remember the far-reaching effects of their efforts on future generations.

"Education is a huge leverage point for the future of the culture. People who have a sense of how the culture should go want to be in education to make a difference in the next generation. They're either going to understand the history and the legacy of our nation, or they're not. They're going to be able to vote with Christian values or they're not. They're going to be willing to serve in public office and vote consistent with our founding documents, or not. *There's a lot at stake.* Everybody, no matter what side of the aisle you're on, knows that the next generation is the key to the future of the nation."

"Yes, it's highly regulated, there's lots of bureaucracy, lots of politics, teachers are walking out due to Covid and other issues. How can we give our teachers of tomorrow hope? I would say to teacher candidates: Education is a wonderful arena to invest in for Christ because you're impacting the future of our country, the future of our world, Scheffel said. "You're impacting children, one person at a time. You may not be able to change the system, but you're right on the ground in the trenches with the next generation. And that's a huge opportunity to love children, love the next generation, love

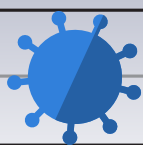
kids so they might view the love of Christ in you."

Scheffel also encourages future teachers to "be highly competent, because if you are, you'll stand out. Christ says that whatever you try to do, do it with all of your might. Not everybody is motivated to do that. Because our CCU students understand the significance of life, they see the implicit in the mundane things — it's not just teaching a fifth grader math — they see something beyond that. And we need people in education who see more than just a task or a standard."

**"It's kids' minds and hearts; it's the future of the nation; it's the soul of a precious child who is eternal, and you have the chance to live out your faith in practical ways on a daily basis, and model Christ's love to them. That's why we teach."**

And that is how CCU has molded and shaped 50 years' worth of teachers to become the educators whose names are immediately remembered as difference makers.





# K-12 Education:

## What can we expect in the wake of Covid-19?

Covid-19 occasioned substantial shifts in education. Preceding 2019, most school districts were increasing technology use to support learning, but nothing like the shifts that occurred in March 2020. If students already had a take-home device, internet access, and an online learning management system and curriculum, the virtual-instruction transition was rapid. But without this infrastructure, districts implemented hybrid instruction, knowing numerous at-risk students were disengaged. To address this need, the distribution of Chromebooks diminished the classroom-to-home connectivity gap. Most districts quickly adopted learning management systems, Zoom, and applications for assessing learning progress. Remote learning introduced blended-learning protocols and adjusted school schedules.

While these changes resulted in what some view as updated instructional models and the hope of a more standardized curriculum, others point to the unfinished learning resulting in widened achievement gaps, less autonomy for teachers, and less parent satisfaction with K-12 education. The pandemic laid the groundwork for accelerating the practices many K-12 education-reform advocates have favored, including shifting the emphasis from traditional academic achievement to 21st century skills, defined as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and life skills. Other trends increasingly infuse instruction with health, safety, and social-emotional wellness, to remove non-academic barriers for student success. For some, this equates to dilution of skill mastery and traditional content learning. There is a pivot from the learning standards movement to whole-child learning objectives, incorporating more holistic measures of success, including



Dr. Debora Scheffel

career and civic engagement around authentic project-based learning. While positive outcomes may follow, this focus can also become easily derailed by agenda-driven experiences, dismissing academic rigor. Tom Vander Ark, an education futurist, points to increasing interest in credentialing learning with demonstrations of mastery in naturalistic settings vs. on standardized tests. Building digital records of accomplishments and enhancing the transcript system to include competencies vs. lists of courses is gaining support. Finally, an emphasis on equity seems to be center stage nationwide in K-12 education, with associated training for students and teachers, adoption of aligned curricula, and student assignments tailored to raise awareness of “learner marginalization.”

Education is experiencing positive direction from trends like using technology to customize instruction for individual students, equipping parents with tools to understand how and what their children are learning, so they can advocate effectively for their values and a quality education. We can capitalize on new educational opportunities and flexibilities like micro-schools, after-school programs, and problem-based learning pedagogies that are student-centered. Embracing hybrid educational models that accommodate individual student preferences for where and how they become educated can be more welcoming to parental input. Conversely, education that forgoes mastery of content and skills cannot support the thinking required for life success, and can devolve into a subjective

and splintered experience around ambiguous terms that currently define 21st century skills. The hope of a common curriculum and equity emphasis can lead to mediocrity and low expectations, ill-serving the students these practices were designed to support.

In every age, there is an opportunity to examine all things and hold fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We must examine trends and realities in education, their impact on our children, and then in wisdom, choose the good, and influence what could be better.

“We see nothing truly till Jesus is our light. Use this telescope of the cross, and you shall see far and clear.” – Charles H. Spurgeon

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*Dr. Debora Scheffel serves as the dean of the School of Education.*



Rachel Frecka '21  
M.Ed. in Educational Leadership

# FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

As the late 2010s Russian political climate changed, Texas native Rachel Frecka discovered an unexpected calling.

From the age of 11 Frecka knew that she wanted to pursue ministry. Her childhood mission trips to Russia solidified her passion for the country and its people. Initially, she thought she might serve as a doctor, but with college fast approaching, Frecka realized her future American medical degree would be ineffective in a foreign country. The hiccup did not deter her from seeking a life abroad. Frecka's affinity for organizational work

redirected her course to a degree in business administration, a program that would help her aid mission organizations.

Following her graduation in the early 2000s, Frecka married her husband, Andy, and the Russophile couple relocated from the States to Perm, a beautiful city on the edge of the Ural Mountains. Over the next 10 years, Andy and Rachel built a life together serving the Lord through Youth with a Mission (YWAM). Frecka first applied her business administration degree to her roles in YWAM, but as the team grew to about 35 staff, she cut her teeth in youth ministry and discipleship.

Eight or nine years into their Russian adventure, Rachel and Andy's family had also grown to include four children.

"I really felt like the Lord was saying it was time to stay home with my kids and let go of leadership and just focus on them," Frecka recalls.

With the same gusto she had applied to her mission work, Frecka delved into the world of homeschooling.

"Somebody told me once that what motivates me is mastery. So, anything I've ever done, if I was going to do it, I was going to learn

everything that I possibly could about it and be the very best at that,” Frecka explained.

For the next 10 years, she focused on researching effective curriculum, her children’s learning styles, and offering her kids the best education possible. During the process, she reflected on her aptitude for teaching and her passion for creating curriculum. She pondered to herself, “Maybe when they’re all grown up and have left the home, maybe this is something I would want to do.”

In 2018, the Russian political climate shifted. The tight-knit expatriate community quickly dissolved as they searched for new jobs or transferred to other countries. Within one year, the Frecka children lost dozens of homeschool friends with whom they had shared events and co-ops in Moscow for almost a decade.

“Because of tensions and everything else, we saw this mass exodus of ex-pats, and it left my kids completely isolated, completely alone. We started thinking maybe homeschooling isn’t the best choice anymore,” Frecka recalled.

As the Freckas investigated the option to attend a local Christian school, Rachel approached the opportunity with an open mind. To defray the cost of tuition, she offered to mop floors and fix lunches. Instead, the school administrator inquired about her professional resume and work experience. With three years of life-coach training, a business administration degree, youth ministry experience, and recently halted homeschool curriculum plans, Hinkson Christian Academy deemed her a perfect fit for their vacant curriculum and instruction coordinator position. Frecka immediately researched the job description and enrolled in summer courses to prepare.

“I discovered I had been doing curriculum and instruction coordination for years,” she realized.

Frecka quickly acclimated to her new

role on the Hinkson leadership team. “Over the next two years, I was like, ‘Yes, this is my thing. This is the place I’m supposed to be ... I could see how God had led me through all of these different training opportunities for this job. I really felt like I had discovered the thing I was made to do,” she said.

To augment her burgeoning career, Frecka explored the idea of a graduate degree. Taking to the web and researching her options, one name continuously appeared in “Top 10” Master of Educational Leadership degree lists: Colorado Christian University. Funny enough, Frecka already had a connection to the University; the chairman of the board at Hinkson was the niece of a CCU School of Education Professions professor, Dr. Bush White. So, Frecka decided to interview with White and apply to CCU’s College of Adult and Graduate Studies to start her degree the following semester. Initially, she envisioned a well-paced plan to completion, but she quickly condensed her plan to a two-year timeline. Little did she know how efficacious her urgency would be.

During the summer of 2019, many of the Hinkson faculty and staff left for

vacation in America. However, with the dawn of Covid-19 and the rapidly enforced border closures in February 2020, the vacationing crew could not return to Russia. Without the elementary principal, business manager, and head of school, Hinkson suffered an empty helm. As a result, the board approached Frecka with a proposal for hire as Hinkson’s president, which she readily accepted the week of her graduation from CCU.

Frecka appreciated how effectively she could implement her new skills and enhance the learning environment at Hinkson. “I’m so glad that I had this preparation because it’s made a huge difference.”

“When I was looking for programs, my biggest fear was that I was going to pay a lot of money and put a lot of energy and time into some theoretical program that I’d get a piece of paper at the end; it would just be about the degree. But I’ve really seen that every class I’ve had, I immediately was able to use at our school. Every writing assignment, every improvement plan that I had to write for my assignments, we actually implemented at Hinkson,” Frecka said.

“We’ve seen a lot of improvement and a



lot of growth just because of the coursework that I had to do. I'm able to use it on a daily basis. It's not just theory. It was absolutely the skills that I needed to do the job."

Not only did her coursework serve her in her career, but CCU's Christian values and worldview proved invaluable, as well.

"To learn from a biblical perspective was hugely important. My classmates, as we were finishing up the program, commented that we had grown spiritually through the process because of that element that was included in the coursework.

"As I look back, I see God's hand. I had no idea that I would need to be in this position now, but God knew two years ago. He gave me that sense of urgency. I thought, 'maybe five years from now, eight years from now, I'd love to be a head of school somewhere.' I had no idea that God actually had pushed the process through so that when the time came, I would be ready for it," Frecka said.

"I've only been at this school for three years, so some of the staff make jokes about my colossal rise to power; but clearly, it's one of those things where God knew, and He knew what was coming. So, He prepared our family. He prepared the school. He gave me the training that I needed. So, when the time came, I was able to step into the role that He prepared for me."

Even with her newfound purpose, Frecka's journey forward hasn't been without challenge. As international families continue to leave Russia, the "face of Hinkson" is changing. Frecka feels strongly about her responsibility to the school.

"For the next five years, my goal would be to help establish the school and whatever this new vision is that God's beginning to open up to us, and making sure that the school is in a place where, if I were to have to leave or if the circumstances changed or God called me elsewhere, I would feel like I had left the school in a good place," Frecka said.

The family has no intention of leaving, though. As a permanent resident, Frecka intends to continue growing roots. "We're in Russia for the long haul. This is where God has called us," she said with resolve.

"There's very little Christian education happening for Russians," Frecka said. She hopes that Hinkson can serve as a catalyst for expanding Christian education, aiding other schools in the fledgling stages, offering training, and simply building awareness.

Hinkson's largest enrollment boasted almost 200 students, but the global pandemic quickly dwindled the record number to 97. A slight but steady increase raised registration to 110 students, some of whom are Russian natives, Frecka's originally intended audience for service. She is interested to see how the new demographics change the school's dynamics. She explains that Hinkson parallels Christian schools in other countries: "We have the pastor kid syndrome, and you have the missionary kid syndrome. I would say we have a lot of kids who are really questioning their faith, but I'm encouraged that we've been able to provide a setting for them to grapple with those questions before they return to their home country and go into college."

And for students from non-faith backgrounds, Frecka and Hinkson provide community, acceptance, and love.

"Even if they don't understand in the very beginning where that love comes from, over time they do come to understand that our atmosphere is different because of the Holy Spirit that lives in us," Frecka said.

Whatever plans God may have for Hinkson and the Frecka family, Rachel Frecka is ready to heed God's call through Christian education.



Rachel Frecka '21  
M.Ed. in Educational Leadership

# Your Classroom is HERE



## From In-seat to Online: How CCU's School of Education Professions is Meeting Students Where They Are



Dr. Jeffrey Renfrow

Imagine Stacy, a military member proudly serving abroad, while raising her growing family. Despite her successful military career, for several years

the Holy Spirit has been hinting that it is time to move toward a very different, but equally noble career as a teacher. After much prayer and discernment, she finally accepts this divine direction but wonders how to pursue the education necessary for this calling under her current circumstances. In her mind, like so many adults in similar situations around the world, the only viable

option will have to be an online program. But not just any online program will do.

After a quick internet search with keywords such as *educator preparation*, *online*, and *licensure*, the service member learns that there are a growing number of options to consider that could meet the needs of many college students; however, Stacy isn't like many college students. Students like Stacy are looking for an online program designed specifically around the needs of adult students that also integrates Christian faith into studies. Is there a college out there that could be all of those things?

After adding *Christian* and *adult* to her Google search, Stacy discovers a place that can check all of the boxes: CCU Online which is part of the College of Adult and Graduate Studies at Colorado Christian University. Students can develop their gifts and answer their callings with the CAGS School of Education Professions, completing degrees alongside peers from all over the world.

These adult professional students can now impact the world as educators, embodying the character and compassion of Jesus Christ. However, just a few years ago, these students would have been unable to attend the solely in-seat education program, a challenge for non-Colorado, metro-area, adult students. So how did School of Education Professions transform into a school that now serves aspiring educators from all corners of the world? It started humbly with a 2015 initiative to develop fully online education program options for aspiring educators in rural Colorado communities. The project was completed in about a year, but it was a year of prayer and focused effort from a dedicated team of instructional designers, subject matter experts, faculty, and administrators.

The program showed great success, and by 2017, the school boasted a catalog of 20+ fully online degree and endorsement programs. CCU Online enrollment counselors started taking calls from folks in rural Colorado who expressed that if it



weren't for these programs, they probably never would have been able to answer the call to teach. In an unanticipated turn, God multiplied the fruits of the University's labors, making it clear that the same online programs reaching rural Coloradans could also reach aspiring educators who were "adulting" from just about anywhere around the world. Consequently, CCU has been blessed with growing enrollments every year since offering these programs in a time when most other educator preparation programs across the country have experienced enrollment declines.

The flexibility and accessibility of these fully online programs are certainly important factors in attracting adult students. But, it's the quality of the programs and the learner experience that ultimately support these students through to successful completion. What do we see when we peek under the hood of these specialized programs? How is it possible to build a high-quality educator preparation program wherein the faculty and staff never interact "in person" with the students? The answers can be found in an analysis of the four "P's" of Purpose, Planning, Preparation, and People.

## PURPOSE

Most worthwhile endeavors begin with a higher purpose. In this case, the higher purpose is the mission of CCU. It's easy to understand how preparing teachers through faith-based programs is aligned to the mission of offering a "Christ-centered higher education transforming students to impact the world with grace and truth." It's important to prepare competent and caring teachers who can meet the needs of diverse students in the modern classroom. But for educators who consider their vocation to be a form of mission work, this is not enough. God calls on teachers to use their gifts to advance His kingdom. However, this calling is not for everyone.

*"Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly," (James 3:1, NIV).* James admonishes that teachers who are entrusted to represent Christ in their work should (and will) be held to a higher standard because of the powerful influence they will have in the lives of others. The School of Education Professions understands and supports this admonishment by ensuring that analysis of relevant biblical guidance is interwoven throughout every course in the form of discussions, assignments, and projects. Additionally, students regularly receive feedback from faculty, administration, and dedicated field coaches on their progress towards being an honorable and effective representative of the kingdom in any classroom around the world they may find themselves teaching.

An important part of preparing students to teach in public schools is to ensure they understand legal issues around freedom of speech and separation of church and state. It's believed by many that Christian teachers have to check their faith at the public school door. This is only partially



## BIDONG TOT, '22

Master of Education, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education



**What inspired you to pursue a career in education?**

I was born in a small village called Akobo, South Sudan, where education was never easy to come by. The only form of education that our village was allowed behind closed doors was learning about God from my mother. About 24 years ago, my father accompanied me on a weeklong journey to a refugee camp in Ethiopia because he wanted one of his sons to go to school. He never even learned to write his own name. I would say my education thus far is a huge blessing in my life, the lives of my siblings, and my children. It has given me the opportunity to be a role model to other English-Language students like myself in my classroom

**Describe your journey from your initial inspiration to entry into CCU's School of Education Professions?**

As a first-year history teacher, I attempted to finish my master's through another online university. I found the format very difficult and was unable to complete the degree at that time. But, I was able to transfer and successfully complete my requirements to get my full license. I was then blessed to take coursework for a free TESOL endorsement. Then, my wife heard about CCU through a MOPS Father's Day scholarship event and entered me into the contest. I was surprised

to find out I received the scholarship. This was a huge blessing to our family since we wouldn't have been able to afford the tuition otherwise. I would be the first of my father's children to attain this level of education.

**How did CCU prepare you to live your calling?**

This master's program at CCU will help me better serve my students, but especially my English-Language students. The professors are so responsive, helpful, and give me practical ideas to improve my teaching skills. It is so refreshing to experience this in an online setting. My classmates are a joy to work with and full of great ideas. The textbooks and readings give real-world examples and strategies. I want to grow my faith in God, and I appreciate CCU matching my values. In many ways, being able to educate children from all nations rings true to the apostles' mission. As a teacher, I want to be able to learn from and support those who are often forgotten. Even though I teach at a public school, my faith still is something I carry with me and use for inspiration when working with my students.

**What does the future look like for you now?**

I am confident the future looks brighter because of what I have accomplished and will accomplish thanks to my CCU education. It will feel amazing when I receive my master's degree through CCU. I have been exploring opportunities in diversity and inclusion and am enjoying practicing my skills with my current students in my diverse high school. My dream career would combine my faith, interest in serving diverse learners, and my passion for education.

correct. While there are certain restrictions on state agents (e.g., teachers), they are allowed to model or even speak directly to their faith in certain circumstances. Students explore relevant laws and court opinions on these issues so that they can confidently go out into their schools, empowered with a strong foundation of both enduring biblical truth and the legal standings of the day. This knowledge contributes to their ability to effectively achieve the overarching purpose of imparting grace and truth and being a light for Christ regardless of their classroom context; a purpose that is the solid foundation upon which the education programs are built. Of course, every foundation is intended to support something. This foundational purpose supports the planning and preparation of high-quality, online educator preparation programs.

## PLANNING AND PREPARATION

The College of Adult and Graduate Studies is blessed with a community of expert instructional designers, faculty, and administrators with many years of experience developing online courses. That said, it's well understood that some things are easier to teach and learn in the online context than others. A common and important aspect of any educator preparation program is the field experience. This is where students go into real classrooms to observe master teachers and apply what they're learning in their coursework by teaching real students. CCU faculty and administration knew right away that one of the biggest challenges in going fully online would be to design a field experience protocol that did not require CCU field coaches (aka mentors) to be physically present with their students. After many trials, iterations, failures, and a few key successes, developers created an effective model for remote field observations. As a result, students now enjoy a customized

field experience in schools within their community, wherever they are in the world, while receiving robust feedback from their CCU field coach through the use of a combination of innovative synchronous and asynchronous technologies.

Innovation has been key in overcoming larger online teaching and learning challenges such as remote field experiences. It's also been important in supporting its ongoing efforts to iteratively improve the online teaching and learning experience in smaller, but no less meaningful ways. One example of innovative pedagogy is the integration of a video-based, synchronous, small group (VSS) discussion in several courses. This novel, research-supported online discussion model essentially flips the traditional online discussion model on its head and is scheduled to be integrated into more courses in the near future. Feedback from both faculty and students who participated in VSS discussions has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly in metrics around social engagement, learning, and overall satisfaction.

It takes a lot of effort from many CCU stakeholders to plan and prepare top-tier online programming. But the effort is worth it when faculty and students reflects on the higher purpose of their work which is to prepare Christ-centered educators who are called to engage with the world. So, how does this happen? It's the people and how they engage with each other and the program.

## PEOPLE

The best programs in the world are nothing without the right people to lead them and learn from them. As leaders of School of Education Professions programs, faculty, field coaches, and administration are all practitioners from the field of K-12 education. They speak to and support their students from voices of knowledge and wisdom that only many years of experience can provide. Every student is partnered with a student service advisor (SSA) and a field coach who each walk side-by-side with the students throughout the entirety of their program. Both serve as prayer partners for

their students. Additionally, the advisors provide encouragement and personalized support with navigating the student experience while field coaches provide individualized professional mentorship informed by their many years of direct experience in the field. In addition to the personalized support provided by the advisors and field coaches, every online course is taught by a seasoned education professional who is highly qualified in their content area and is a faithful sister or brother in Christ.

The roles these people serve in are unique and important, but they all rally around the common goal of transforming the lives of students like Stacy. It's important to note that Stacy's story is just that, a story. But, each element of her story is attributable to one or more of the students the School of Education Professions has served over the years. In many cases, the stories of transformation that real students have experienced are more inspiring than Stacy's. Following are real testimonials of student transformation with names in pseudonym.



## IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK: ERIC'S STORY

Eric L. was a cart collector at Walmart. On his breaks, he would tutor fellow employees using the whiteboard in the breakroom. His boss noticed his gift for teaching and encouraged him to get his degree. Eric is now on his way to completing CCU's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education program and will soon have a whiteboard of his own from which he can inspire even more learners.

## LATE CHECK-IN: LANCE'S STORY

Lance J. has been a hotelier for most of his life. In his late forties, he felt the calling to become a teacher. Now 52, Lance is about to complete his elementary education degree; he is thrilled to transition from the hotel manager's office to a classroom of his own where he can be a witness for Christ and empower his students with knowledge.

By staying faithful to their purpose and the broader mission of CCU, the CAGS School of Education Professions has enjoyed a long

season of blessings. These blessings have resulted in consistent enrollment growth by students from around the world and high-quality academic programming tailored to meet the unique needs of these diverse adult students. As long as there are Erics, Lances, and "Stacys" in the world, School of Education Professions will continue to improve and adapt its programs so that this special kind of student will always have a place at CCU where they can fulfill the calling to be a teacher.

*Dr. Jeffrey Renfrow is the director of undergraduate education programs and assistant professor of curriculum and instruction for the School of Education Professions.*

## CHELSI MATTHEWS, '22

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Certificate



I am from a small town in Alabama, but the big God I serve has led me to be His hands and feet in various places around the world. My education career has not been

"typical," but it has given me a platform and opened doors to share the love of Christ in creative ways, both in the U.S. and internationally on the mission field. I completed my undergrad in early childhood education several years ago, and I now live in an area of Ghana where I feel led to specifically focus on better quality education and training for students and teachers here.

During my search for degree programs, I was looking for a program that would better equip me in a cross-cultural context. It was important to find a program that was offered fully online, since I am currently doing ministry in Ghana. After encouragement from friends in the education field to pursue a TESOL certificate, I found that CCU is a solid Christian university that offers this certificate program. Once I began the process of inquiries, my enrollment counselor connected me with professors in the education department so we could discuss the concerns I had about taking classes from overseas. I felt nothing but encouragement from the admissions staff and faculty that I was able to work with throughout the enrollment process.

I am now in my second block of the TESOL program, and my experience has already been extremely helpful, relevant, and has pushed me to sharpen my learning tools to continue doing what

I feel called to do here. I have enjoyed the community of learners I have met so far, and it truly feels like a family each class. The faith-based values and intentional way that biblical perspectives are integrated in the coursework has been such an encouragement for me in my learning experience with CCU. This has helped me to think more critically about the academic training I am receiving and how to apply it in a way that will attract others to Christ. Once I complete the program, Lord willing, in the spring of 2022, I aim to use my newly acquired skills and knowledge to continue serving in Ghana to build a bridge of love to the gospel through literacy evangelism. I am in the process of establishing an after-school program for children in a remote village. If effective, it can be replicated in other areas to encourage the students, teachers, and parents within the communities.

# A Well-traveled Education



Dr. John P. Lesko

I would like to think that my own experience has had an influence on School of Education Professions students in terms of broadening their outlook

on possibilities which exist for teachers. Meeting a well-traveled individual is always a special experience for anyone willing to listen. Consider Marco Polo, the famous Venetian merchant who returned to Europe with unbelievable tales. Or consider missionaries who have lived such different lives among cultures so removed from our way of life that we have difficulty understanding their experience. Or think of the servicemen returning home after WWII from locations around the world, pockets full of strange looking coins, with foreign orthographies and symbols. I remember looking through such coins as a child, coins which my father and his set of friends would swap back and forth in the decades after the Second World War. As children, my brothers and I used to empty out the metal tennis ball can coin collections, and sift through these

metal oddities with delight and curiosity.

I'm certainly no Marco Polo, yet through teaching English overseas I've been able to gain some deep insights which I hope to pass along, somewhat like these coins. Rather than keeping them jangling around in one's pocket, why not share the wealth? In today's virtual environments, I suppose we're talking about virtual pockets, and electronic currencies and coins, digitally distilled and imprinted bits and bytes of wisdom on exchange.

Today the world is a much smaller one, to use a frequently referenced cliché, with distances easily travelled in a day or less to most parts of the globe. My own studies as a young scholar, and subsequently my professional calling, applied linguistics and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), have taken me to a number of places (Canada, France, Scotland, South Korea, UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia), and I have greatly enjoyed discussing these experiences with my students, and suggesting possibilities for their own international teaching careers.

The School of Education Professions has been fortunate to attract what I view as very high caliber graduate students who

bring experiences of their own to enliven class discussions and discourse. Even those students who haven't yet travelled outside of the U.S. have had some very rich experiences right here within our own borders. One does not need to leave the U.S. in order to teach internationally as there are opportunities to teach via video platforms such as Zoom and Skype, and as there are also high numbers of immigrant English Language Learners (ELLs) within our schools. So while I've settled at CCU after many years of travel and teaching, around 18 years abroad, I'm still voyaging in a sense, in the company of fellow travelers in our CCU programs, something like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and the unfinished stories of a rather wide range of characters. Or in a spiritual (and cleaner) sense, more like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the allegorical representation of our voyage to the Celestial City. That's my destination, and I hope that our work at CCU will result in many more fellow travelers embarking upon voyages even more fantastic than what Sinbad the Sailor could have contemplated.

*Dr. John P. Lesko is associate professor of education for the School of Education Professions.*

# The Landscape of K-12 and Post-Pandemic Teacher Preparation



Dr. Wendy Wendover

The need for effective teachers in the classroom to possess a mastery of subject content and classroom management skills remains central to CCU

education programs entering the K-12 school “landscape.” The forces that the educational system grapples with remain complex: Dealing with competing stakeholder agendas, limited financial resources, and increasingly diverse populations with a wider range of student needs to address top the list. These issues manifest in inequity placed on K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions in the face of additional strains on human resources, compounded by ever-widening educator shortages both locally and nationally. Then came Covid-19.

The School of Education Professions in the College of Adult and Graduate Studies addressed several teacher needs to support demands placed by the pandemic. A specific need was to support instructors in engaging their online students and to address remote curriculum delivery. CCU prayerfully considered what God would have us do to meet the COVID challenges that teacher/principal candidates and their learners

were experiencing. CCU candidates were given additional support to secure Google certification and provide technology applications and curriculum modifications. For example, in the summer of 2021, “Designing for Online Learning” continuing education was developed and provided free of charge through a Virginia and Harold Simpson Foundation grant.

Historically, adversity has fostered innovation in this country. So, what insights have we identified from aspects of the Covid-driven remote learning experience? It’s likely that educator-preparation programs will provide more blended schooling content for teacher candidates to prepare for a world that is now more open to blended learning in K-12. Perhaps virtual parent/teacher conferences and flipped learning will continue and also be addressed in preparation programs. Whatever CCU is called to do, we will continue to turn to God’s word on adversity. Deuteronomy 31:6,8 “Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes before you. ... He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.” (NRSV)

## RESOURCES

EdResearch for Recovery supports education leaders in making evidence-based decisions, including broad-based academic supports for all students and school practices

to address student learning loss.

The Learning Policy Institute’s (LPI) Restarting and Reinventing School resource names 10 priorities that “speak both to transforming learning and to closing opportunity and achievement gaps.” Priorities include assessing student needs and expanding learning time. LPI also released guides titled “The Importance of Getting Tutoring Right” and “Accelerating Learning as We Build Back Better.”

EdTrust released a guide titled “Strategies to Solve Unfinished Learning,” which included recommendations for targeted intensive tutoring, expanded learning time, and the importance of strong relationships.

EdWeek released a guide titled “Overcoming Covid-19 Learning Loss.” The guide draws from interviews with researchers and educators to identify interventions with a promising track record in accelerating student learning. The guide includes details around assessment, tutoring, extended learning time, and other strategies.

Colorado: H.B. 21- 1234 (introduced, 2021) would establish the Colorado high-impact tutoring program to address unfinished learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

*Dr. Wendy Wendover serves as the dean of the School of Education Professions.*



# 1,000 Miles for Hope

SUPPORTS ADULT LEARNERS IN NEED

Dr. Bush White on his 1,000 Miles for Hope ride.

In the fall of 2020, The Hope Fund was launched for adult learners enrolled in the College of Adult and Graduate Studies. Like the CCU Fund, this fund will provide vital scholarship dollars to adult learners who need help finishing strong and obtaining a transformational degree from CCU.

What does a typical CCU adult student look like? In general, they are unique and determined. They have the remarkable resiliency and grit that it takes to be an adult student. Adult learners must navigate the waters of returning to school after, in many cases, a very long hiatus from any classroom environment. CAGS students are going to school amid the challenges of everyday life. They have been hit the hardest by the effects of the pandemic and inflation on their jobs and family budget. Many are trying their best to balance family, kids, jobs, looking for jobs, military commitment, relationships, elderly parents . . . many struggle with finances,

## THE HOPE FUND

mortgage and rent payments, bills, broken relationships, and so much more.

Dr. Bush White, director of graduate education programs, assistant professor of curriculum and instruction, was inspired to promote the unique needs of our adult learners by creating “1,000 Miles for Hope,” his solo bike ride through the southwest — from Denver to Phoenix — in October 2021.

*“For the past two years God has put on my heart to do something that would support the University and our students. Many of our students sacrifice financially to get an education from CCU. They come because they believe in what CCU stands for and the quality of education they receive. I have seen Colorado Christian University transform into a great University. God has provided for the growth of*

*the university and the spiritual growth of the students. I love the fact that CCU is a light for truth in academics and to the world. I place my hope for our nation and the world in Jesus, transforming our students into men and women who will stand for truth. Our great nation has a need for strong citizens who will stand for what is right. CCU helps to develop those citizens and continues to proclaim Christ and hope.”*

Dr. Bush White

Because of White’s efforts, more than \$6,500 has been raised to date, and we invite you to make a gift in honor of White and an adult learner in need with your tax-deductible gift to The Hope Fund. You can visit our secure giving site at [ccu.edu/hopfund](https://ccu.edu/hopfund).

To learn more about White’s bike journey and to view his amazing trip photos, please visit his blog at [ridingthesouthwest.com/2021](https://ridingthesouthwest.com/2021).

# THE CCU FUND

surpasses \$1.75M since its inception in 2018

Delanie Giffin  
Accounting and Business Administration

Donors play an important role in helping students enroll and graduate from Colorado Christian University. In just four years, alumni, parents, faculty, staff, and friends have invested over 5,000 gifts to the CCU Fund, which directly supports our traditional students in the College of Undergraduate Studies on the Lakewood campus.

One such student is Delanie. She hails from Colorado Springs, Colo., and she has two younger brothers who inspire her every day. Her youngest brother, Daniel, is currently battling brain cancer, but that hasn't stopped him from pursuing God with his whole heart. Delanie shared, "He has prayed with every single surgeon before every surgery and shares his faith with everyone who hears his story."

When asked to complete the sentence "I love CCU because ..." Delanie will tell you it's because of how committed the faculty and students are to teaching and following Jesus in all they do. She dreams of becoming a powerhouse businesswoman by pursuing dual-degrees in accounting and business administration along with a minor in finance. She spoke highly of how

the business curriculum helped convince her that CCU was the right choice. "I loved going into a business class where the professor prayed before class and taught how we could apply kingdom principles to the business world."

To help pay her tuition, Delanie serves as a crew boss for the Wildland Fire Logistics Department of the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control. However, without additional scholarships from donors and the CCU Fund, she would not have been able to come to CCU. She spoke of how blessed she felt that she had the opportunity to go to a Christ-centered school. When she graduates, she can't wait to work in finance and help people be good stewards of their money.

We have a campus full of students just like Delanie who are working hard to support their tuition, but they need you to invest in their education so they can graduate with less debt and impact our culture for Christ. Every gift makes a difference — no matter the size. Every single gift to the CCU Fund is pooled with other gifts to make a huge difference for students in need.

*Because of your gifts last year, 129 students received either an endowed or funded scholarship, and countless others benefitted from support made possible through the CCU Fund. To make a gift this year in honor of students like Delanie, please visit our secure site at [ccu.edu/ccufund](https://ccu.edu/ccufund). You can answer a student's prayer and be their hero when you support the CCU Fund!*

**Save the Date  
For Gives Day 2022**



CCU's annual Gives Day is Thursday, February 10. You will have the opportunity to make a difference for a student by supporting scholarships for undergraduates, adult learners, scholar-athletes, and future nurses. Mark your calendar, and show why you love CCU with your tax-deductible gift on Gives Day 2022.



# UNLEASH THE POWER OF YOUR ALUMNI AND PARENT NETWORK

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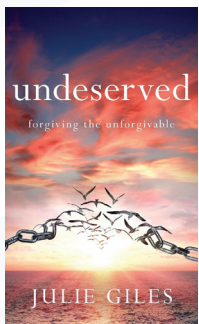
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# CCU CLASS NOTES

## How CCU alumni are making a difference

### Julie Giles '18



Julie Giles is the author of *Undeserved: Forgiving the Unforgivable*, which delves into the subject of forgiveness after great personal and physical abuse.

Giles knows the devastating agony of horrific abuse. She has lived a life bound by this and a life set free. She has struggled, suffered, and pushed to release the weight of a past bound by distrust and destructive patterns. She speaks with an honest vulnerability that will stir your soul and inspire you to grow. In her poignant book you will learn:

- How to interrupt dysfunctional patterns
- Freedom from pain
- Release from shame
- Courage to confront past problems
- The role of forgiveness

*Giles is pursuing a Ph.D. at Grand Canyon University, and is married to Isaac Giles '89. Her*

*daughter, Heather Giles, graduated from CCU in 2014. Her book can be found on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Target in both printed and e-book form.*

### Kelly Kendall '04

Kelly Kendall is the CEO and president of KNC Strategic Services, a firm that provides cybersecurity professional services in southern California. Kelly helps clients manage three risks: compliance risk (GRC), cybersecurity threat risk, and information security risk. “We are patriots who know that our country, our government, our military, our utility companies, and government contractors are under constant attack from invisible adversaries. We are a disabled-veteran-owned small business.”

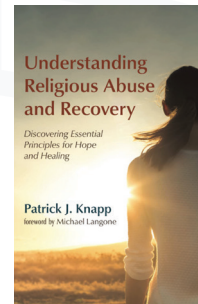
Kendall is also the president and executive director of US VALOR (Veterans Advancing through Learning, Opportunities, and Resources), a non-profit formed to change the story of transitioning out of the military through a cybersecurity apprenticeship program. US VALOR was recently recognized with the Innovator of the Year Award in the non-profit category by the *San Diego Business Journal* at the Cybersecurity Stewardship Awards 2021. .

### Patrick Knapp '72



Patrick Knapp takes an interest in religious abuse recovery stemming from his involvement in an aberrant bible-based group (1970-1984).

He graduated from Rockmont College in 1972 with a degree in psychology, and his Denver Seminary philosophy of religion (2000) M.A. thesis was *The Place of Mind-Control in the Cult Recovery Process*. He went on to Gordon-Conwell Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, and his Ph.D. was completed at Graduate Theological Foundation (Pastoral Psychology, 2019). For many years, he and his wife, Heidi, have directed Becoming Free LLC (BecomingFree.org). This organization



offers education and life-coaching for those affected by abusive religious groups.

His book, *Understanding Religious Abuse and Recovery: Discovering essential principles for hope and healing*,

identifies the four major, identifiable perspectives on how people best understand and recover from religious abuse. Both secular and faith-based (Christian) adherents can be variously identified in each of these approaches. This book examines these viewpoints and evaluates their various strengths and limitations. It concludes that each perspective is helpful to the extent possible, given the limitations of its respective philosophic or theological assumptions.

*Patrick and Heidi make their home in Highlands Ranch, Colo.*

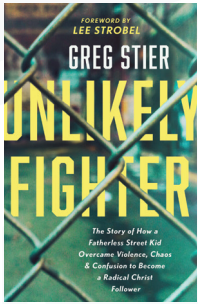
### Greg Stier '88



Greg Stier — evangelist, author, speaker, and founder of the global youth ministry Dare 2 Share — recently released his autobiography, *Unlikely Fighter: The Story of*

*How a Fatherless Street Kid Overcame Violence, Chaos, and Confusion to Become a Radical Christ Follower*. He was raised in a family of bodybuilding, tobacco-chewing, fist-fighting thugs. He never knew his biological father because his mom had met his dad at a party; she got pregnant, and he left town. Though his mom almost aborted him, in a last-minute twist, Stier's life was spared for so much more.

*Unlikely Fighter* is the incredible story of how God showed up in Stier's life and how he can show up in yours as well. This is a memoir of violence and mayhem and how



God can transform everything.

Stier's book is available from Amazon, Audible, Barnes & Noble, Christian Book Distributors, and Lifeway, among other places books are sold.

Stier met his wife, **Debbie (Hein) Stier '90**, while they were undergraduate students at CCU. They make their home in Arvada, Colo. with their two children.

## Alumni Receive Awards at the 2021 Alumni and Parent Weekend

**Toni-Marie Yorty '19** was honored with the G.O.L.D. Award, which recognizes a graduate of the last decade who shows career or vocational promise in their field.



Yorty earned a alternative teacher licensure from CCU in 2019. She attended Baylor University and then Liberty University, where she studied environmental

science, business administration, and Christian counseling. Yorty was the director of the Silt Youth Sports Association in Silt, followed by stints as a paraprofessional and long-term substitute teacher for special education at Garfield County School District RE-2. In November 2016, Yorty became a third-grade math and science teacher for Garfield County and fulfilled her calling to be an effective and exemplary educator. Yorty is an Edpuzzle coach, where she teaches educators how to use online and digital platforms to empower students to continue learning wherever they are. She has brought excellence to her profession and to her alma mater.

**Jason Taft '01** was honored with this year's Distinguished Alumni Award, which is bestowed upon an alumnus who demonstrates the mission of the University through excellence in their



career or vocational field — in society, in the marketplace, as a professional, or in some extraordinary leadership role.

Taft graduated from CCU in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in social science and then went to Norwich University to receive a master's degree in diplomacy. He started out his career as an instructor at the famed Denver Street School, where he taught, coached, and mentored high school students who had been removed from the public school system. From there, he moved to Russia as a missionary, providing leadership, support, and fundraising for the Caucasus Cross-Cultural Foundation, a non-profit that meets the emotional and physical needs of Chechen and other north Caucasus children affected by civil war.

From there, Taft launched his career with Samaritan's Purse, starting as a regional director for Russia, Europe, and Central Asia, followed by a stint as the international assistant director of Operation Christmas Child. In July 2017, he was promoted to the position of international director of Operation Christmas Child, leading over 90,000 leaders in over 100 countries to facilitate projects that impact over 12 million children each year. Most of these children have been affected by war, disease, famine, and natural disasters. Last year at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Taft spoke to the CCU community about the work of Samaritan's Purse to relieve human suffering around the globe.



## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Colorado Christian University



Have an update or looking to reconnect with the CCU community? Contact Kara Johnston Mott, director of alumni and parent relations, at 303.963.3320 or [kjohnston@ccu.edu](mailto:kjohnston@ccu.edu).

For the latest news about your classmates, please follow us on social media:



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*Grace and Truth*

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

8787 W. Alameda Ave.

Lakewood, CO 80226

# 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF EDUCATOR PROGRAMS

## SAVE THE DATE

Celebrate 50 years of educator preparation  
for Rockmont, Western Bible, CCU, and CCU Online students!

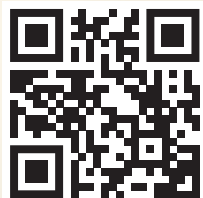
### GALA DINNER

***Friday, April 1, 2022***

*Anschutz Great Room, Lakewood Campus*

Alumni and friends are invited to join us and honor the legacy of  
Colorado's \*top teacher preparation program at a celebration dinner.

***For more details, visit***



\*National Council on Teacher Quality