Dean’s Letter

Celebrating a renovation and a bright future
I have the honor of announcing that the renewal of the Ketchum Arts and Sciences building is complete. We undertook a major renovation of the building in partnership with the state of Colorado. The building is now one of the premier academic buildings in the country.

Features

Breakthrough: fully recyclable carbon-fiber composite
Strong and light carbon-fiber composites can be easily and cost-effectively recycled into new material just as strong as the originals, a team of researchers led by CU-Boulder has found. The composites are popular because they are lighter than aluminum and stronger than steel. Unlike metal, however, carbon-fiber composite is generally not recyclable.

Prof finds reasons for climate hope
When Peter Blanken flew to Paris for the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in December, he had somewhat low expectations. But the CU-Boulder geography professor was heartened to see and hear that the 200 countries attending COP21 agreed on the urgency to act. “There was a strong sense that if we don’t do something in these two weeks (of the conference), it will be too late.”

What Rousseau didn’t know
Economic inequality is a hot topic in a presidential election year. Economists, politicians and journalists are all weighing in — but what, exactly, can an archaeologist bring to the discussion? Sarah Kurnick, a Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Fellow at CU-Boulder, is glad you asked.

‘Hysteria’ theory short on science
In 2011, 12 high-school girls in upstate New York began to exhibit strange neurological symptoms: tics, verbal outbursts, seizure-like activity and difficulty speaking. The diagnosis was “conversion disorder” — in which stress induces neurological symptoms — and “mass psychogenic illness,” a sort of domino-effect delusion. But that conclusion relied on a “dusty old Freudian theory” and ignored other likely causes, CU researchers contend.
CU takes digital look at ancient skies
Having captured the summer solstice and a week’s worth of sunsets, sunrises and their lunar equivalents from the vantage point of ancient Chacoan people in southwestern Colorado, using parabolic video technology, a multidisciplinary team from CU-Boulder counted its June 2015 trip a success. Back in Boulder, the team discovered a mesmerizing show by the Aurora Borealis, which rarely dips so far south.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/cu-takes-digital-look-at-ancient-skies/

Greenhouses grow better students, biologists say
In the oasis of greenhouses on campus, biology students can make cutting-edge scientific advances, while surrounded by tropical plants in a tranquil setting, where the only sounds you hear are the soft whirring of fans, the rustling of leaves and the occasional gentle drips of water.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/greenhouses-grow-better-students-biologists-say/

A ‘subversive critique’ in ancient Greece?
Listen to some of ancient Athens’ greatest writers and philosophers, from Plato to Aristophanes, and you’ll come away thinking that the annual festival of Adonis was an absurd, over-the-top, insignificant — yet potentially dangerous — cult ritual observed by hysterical, wailing women. A CU-Boulder classicist argues that the festival was actually a “dissent and a critique of important cultural practices.”
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/prof-sees-a-subversive-critique-in-ancient-greece/

Meditation outperforms meds on postpartum depression
Pregnant and postpartum women at risk of depression are less likely to suffer depression when they meditate or get in a yoga pose than when they are treated with psychotherapy or antidepressants, a study led by CU-Boulder researchers has found.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/01/mindfulness-training-more-effective-against-postpartum-depression-than-antidepressant-regimen-study-finds/

Biologists' 'boot camps' help fight disease in Africa
A distinguished professor of biology and a biology alumna recently traveled to the University of Ghana in Legon to participate in a two-week course on modern cell biology for biochemistry graduate students. The duo have taught the course in four African countries. They call the courses modern cell-biology “boot camps” and say their goal is the promotion of research in Africa.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/cu-biologists-fighting-disease-in-africa/

Beckwith named new scholar in conservative thought
Francis Beckwith will serve as the Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy for the 2016-17 academic year. He is the fourth person to hold the position.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/beckwith-named-new-scholar-in-conservative-thought/
Donors

From reservation to preservation
Start unraveling the annual 100 Navajo Rugs silent auction, one of the longest-running, most successful fundraisers at the Museum of Natural History at the University of Colorado Boulder, and you’ll eventually come to ... Pepsi Cola. It’s quite a yarn.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/from-reservation-to-preservation/

With private boost, CU launches Finnish courses
The Program in Nordic Studies has begun offering Finnish-language courses at the University of Colorado Boulder. It’s noteworthy because it’s such a rare language, and the courses are offered for full credit, which means the courses can satisfy a foreign-language requirement.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/with-private-boost-cu-launches-finnish-courses/

Big donation of archiving gear boosts film studies
With the recent gift of $2 million worth of professional preservation and archiving equipment from Wyndham Hannaway, a visual-effects specialist, film studies will be adding film preservation and archiving to impressive list of offerings. Hannaway’s Boulder company, GWH&A, has been a leader in creating professional imaging for film and media services for more than 30 years.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/big-donation-of-archiving-gear-boosts-film-studies/
Without instruments, alums FACE the music
Inside a Boulder living room, the sound of a band in perfect sync fills the air. Close your eyes & you can picture it: The percussionist tapping away on drums; a bass guitar player rattling the walls; the lead singer carrying the melody as the keyboardist and harmonica player riff off each other. Open your eyes, however, and you see five guys seated around a table — not an instrument in sight.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/without-instruments-alums-face-the-music/

World studies pave way to a stellar career
Alex Becker, a 2006 International Affairs Program graduate, embodies a global-minded, entrepreneurial spirit. He says CU-Boulder opened introduced him to a host of new opportunities. “But I never thought I would be doing anything like this,” he says in an email sent from aboard a catamaran as first mate.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/world-studies-pave-way-to-a-stellar-career/

Obstacles don’t deter standout grad’s cancer-drug research
Alla Balabanova describes her time at CU-Boulder as “anything but easy,” adding that she faced obstacles “just about every step of the way,” starting with her initial uncertainty about what to study. That might not sound like a ringing endorsement, but it is. Balabanova graduated summa cum laude in biochemistry and was the Fall 2015 outstanding graduate of the College of Arts and Sciences.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/obstacles-dont-deter-standout-grads-cancer-research/

Arts and Sciences hits the road to meet alums
Nearly 40 alumni and friends of the College of Arts and Sciences recently gathered in San Diego for an intimate evening of networking with local Buffs. It’s part of a new effort to connect with Arts and Sciences alumni across the country while featuring the great work our students and faculty are doing on campus.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/arts-and-sciences-hits-the-road-to-meet-alums/
Kudos

Classics unfazed by the ‘crisis in humanities’
In the headlines, the words “humanities” and “crisis” are so commonly conjoined that you’d think that college courses on human thought, experience and creativity are collapsing like the Roman Empire. The story has more nuance than the headline, as the Classics Department illustrates.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/classics-unfazed-by-the-crisis-in-humanities/

Noted filmmaker joins CU film studies faculty
Associate Professor David Gatten became fascinated with cinematography after watching Star Wars at age 7, so it’s no surprise he became a filmmaker. What is remarkable his work on experimental films using 16 mm film. Considered one of the foremost filmmakers of his generation, Gatten has joined the CU-Boulder Film Studies’ faculty in 2015 as associate director for graduate studies.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/noted-filmmaker-joins-cu-film-studies-faculty/

CU-Boulder’s Gruber explores dark side of happiness
At some point in your life you’ve likely heard that “too much of a good thing” can be bad for you. June Gruber has used science to prove this old adage true. Gruber, a professor of psychology and neuropsychology, studies emotional extremes and the upper limits of human positivity. Leaders in her field are taking note of Gruber’s groundbreaking research.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/cu-boulders-gruber-explores-dark-side-of-happiness/

Group taps broad expertise to understand emotion
Human emotions are universally experienced but not fully understood. A new initiative at the University of Colorado Boulder aims to tap a wide range of expertise to shed light on “the mysteries of human nature.”
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/group-taps-broad-expertise-to-understand-emotion/

Classicalist wins top honor for ‘daring, meticulous’ book
Jackie Elliott, associate professor of classics at the University of Colorado Boulder, has won a 2016 Goodwin Award of Merit from the Society for Classical Studies, the nation’s top research recognition in classical languages & literature. Elliott was recognized for her book, Ennius and the Architecture of the Annales.
http://artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/2016/02/classicist-wins-top-honor-for-daring-meticulous-book/