



Presidents Leadership Class
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

PLC
ALUMNI



Alumni Newsletter April 2021

Food for Thought

Reinvigorating Our Alumni Community

written by Nancy Glover, PLC 1990

It has been my pleasure to serve as president of the Alumni Board for the last year or so (pandemic time). The last year has made it possible for alums from afar to participate in events that, historically, have required them to be in the Boulder/Denver area. The Alumni Board has been a fabulous way to meet and get to know PLCers from other cohorts outside of my years at CU.

With the support of Emily and the Student Staff, the Class Champions have helped increase the number of alums aware of and attending events; we've gone from 420 contacts 18 months ago to more than 1,000 today! From Bert Carollo in the original class of '72, to Joe Pesce '84, David Davenport '93, Ashley Elmlad '03, and Kate Minnihan '14, active alumni and Class Champions from across generations have been key in increasing these numbers. As we quickly approach 50 years of PLC in the fall of 2022, we hope that everyone will have a chance to reconnect with the PLC community.

Last year, we launched the Think and Drink (T&D) virtual happy hour; every month, you can get together with PLC alums. It's a fabulous way to see people you've not seen in a while and engage with new PLCers. To quote Board of Advocates Chair Gretchen Bliss, "It is amazing how the years peel off and you are right back in recitation, discussing things important and impactful." The T&Ds have been an excellent way to spend an hour getting away from whatever your daily routine looks like. The topics have been wide ranging, from how COVID is affecting business, healthcare, government, and education to US/China - US/Russia relationships. We've had 464 T&D attendees over the course of the last year, with 145 unique PLCers joining. We're always looking for new topics, so if you are interested in bringing your expertise to a T&D session, please let us know.

As we build toward the PLC 50TH anniversary, I look forward to seeing you at one of our events or reconnecting with the PLC Community.

Upcoming Events

You are cordially invited to join us to Think & Drink with your fellow Alumni!

Join us for an intellectual happy hour with your PLC Alumni Peers for our original series, the Think & Drink! Our sessions showcase a diverse array of alumni who represent different eras of PLC as well as unique disciplines, business, and mindsets.

The Think & Drinks happen on a monthly basis with the meet ups taking place on the second Thursday of every month at 5p MST.

Please feel free to share these events with your PLC friends and encourage folks to check it out. We would love to see you jump on a call and say hello and share your thoughts and insights about the topics at hand.

You can find the logistical details for upcoming sessions below. We are looking forward to 'seeing' you!

Join us for our monthly
PLC Alumni

Think & Drink

The First Thursday of Every Month
4p mountain time

- Alumni facilitators from various PLC cohorts
- Timely and thought-provoking topics
- Interactive and engaging activities
- Laughter, lively conversation, and community

<https://cuboulder.zoom.us/j/92969961429>

The Zoom link is standardized:

<https://cuboulder.zoom.us/j/92969961429>

Our upcoming monthly sessions will be:

May 13th

June 10th

July 8th

August 12th

Stay tuned to the Alumni Facebook page and your email for information about our presenters and topics!



Save the Date, Alums!

Believe it or not, the Presidents Leadership Class will be celebrating its **50th birthday in the Fall of 2022!** We are in the process of planning a great weekend of events and celebrations. We are hoping to highlight the incredible accomplishments of our alumni over the years, the work that our current students are engaged with, and look forward to many more years of success for PLC.

Stay tuned for more information in the next few months! If you'd like to be involved in the planning of the 50th Anniversary weekend, let us know.

**Submit photos for the
Anniversary weekend here!**

Alumni Spotlights

Nikhil Dandavati, PLC 2006

CEO Valve Systems, Inc.



Nikhil Dandavati, PLC 2006, is the CEO of the engineering firm, Valve Systems, Inc, his family's company. Throughout his time at CU and the years following, Nikhil has been an entrepreneur. He began with his business in undergrad, **Tuition Specialists**, that helped CU students apply for in-state tuition. In 2010, he started a non-profit called **Uncharted** focused on helping entrepreneurs developing their businesses and ideas.

Originally, Nikhil thought he wanted to go into venture capital, however later in life, he found himself at Valve Systems, taking over the family business. In his role as CEO, he is driven to promote sustainability in his business practices. Caring for the environment is a passion for Nikhil, who loves to spend time outdoors, especially seeing the world through trail running. Due to his brother's influence, Nikhil became an Ultramarathon runner. A huge focus of his life is fitness and he spends a lot of time training and running.

The biggest lesson Nikhil learned from PLC was how to cooperate. Collaboration with people to be effective in the workplace. It gave him a strong friendship foundation, and the ability to collaborate. He still serves on the PLC Advisory Board and loves to provide mentorship to current PLC students. Nikhil loves to focus on relationship building in all walks of life and treasures the bonds he formed in and from PLC.

Maureen Rikhof, PLC 1992

Director of International Relations at Otero Junior College



Maureen Johnson Rikhof is a member of PLC class of 1992. Rikhof ran for the Board of Regents in 1996. She attributes this to her time in PLC empowering her to think, "If they can do it, so can I." With the help of MANY PLC classmates, she ran a statewide campaign and won the election in 1996 with nearly 1 million votes statewide. For Rikhof, serving on the board or regents for 6 years was its own lesson in leadership - the opportunity to work with seasoned leaders, see people at their best and their worst, and watching the power dynamics in an institution the size of CU. Her work on the Board always came down to social justice. She remembers recitations about Rawlsian ideals - protecting those in our society who are the least equipped to change their own reality.

One of the most meaningful lectures she remembers from her time in PLC was Dr. Mom; Marianne Neifert. She had stressed the importance of building healthy personal relationships and support networks. Rikhof also remembers Don Johnson sharing with her class that sometimes it is enough as a listener to let someone know that you are empathizing and responding and a simple, "that really sucks," is enough sometimes. David Chrislip's visionary lectures were also inspiring and meaningful.

Rikhof's career has been in higher education - first at CU and now at a small junior college in rural Colorado. She has worked in the non-profit sector; all positions which worked to raise resources or lead organizations that empowered individuals living with a disability. She cares deeply about access and inclusion. Currently, she is bringing kids from other countries to my community in SE Colorado to pursue higher education goals. She appreciates the opportunity to work with dynamic young people who have already taken the biggest leap in their lives - living in a community they know nothing about to see where it launches their leadership journey.

Rikhof has five kids - the oldest, Henry, is a sophomore at CU Boulder; second oldest and my stepson are about to graduate high school and launch on their own journeys; and she has 14-year old twins! She just re-married in December of 2020 and have found a partner that I'd like to think Dr. Mom would appreciate. We enjoy outdoor adventuring, living in the small town of La Junta, dreaming about post-pandemic big adventures and cocktails.

PLC Today

PLC Student Staff Internal Team Update

a note from PLCer Camryn Woodworth (2017)

Hello from your 2020-2021 Internal team! Our focus is on creating and sustaining community within the current PLC cohorts. We have Class Coordinators, Mentor Programs Coordinators, Social Media/Newsletter Coordinators, a Data Analyst, and our liaisons to the Alumni Community and the Center for Leadership.

This semester and last, we've been focusing on creating purposeful community events and programming with a particular emphasis on accessibility. The Alumni Mentoring Program panels, PLC^2 (our peer-to-peer mentoring), cohort presentation nights, and the all PLC Talent Show are just a few of the events that we are particularly proud of this semester. Not only does our team's scope include encouraging community within PLC, we are also responsible for much of the communication within that community.

Our team members in charge of social media, alumni relations, and data have been hard at work utilizing social platforms at a high level, connecting with new alums by the week, and collecting information to improve our community. Looking to the future, we are excited to take the lessons that we've learned from a completely remote year and apply them to create accessible and innovative programming next year.





Bee Club

a note from PLCers Travis Tortline (2018)

Travis Torline (PLC 2018) and John Douthit (PLC 2020) are President and Vice President of the University of Colorado Bee Club. The club strives to promote the education, support, and success of bees through community outreach programs, community service projects, and on-campus activities led by its diverse group of club members. By partnering and volunteering with similarly minded organizations the club also hopes to engage others in supporting bee conservation, while club meetings aim to generate discussions about the way humans coexist with bees and the environment.

In its three year lifetime, the club has volunteered at events like the Honeybee Hootenanny and the Boulder Pollinator Festival, welcomed speakers such as local beekeeper Beth Conrey and CU Environmental Center Director Dave Newport, held arts and craft activities to help students create items such as beeswax sandwich wraps, and even sold local honey on the CU campus. With such great events, an active membership of 40+ members, and a focus on creating an inclusive community, it's no surprise that the club was deemed the Student Organization of the Year in 2020.

While the COVID pandemic has brought some activities to a halt, the club still continues to meet in a virtual format and is looking forward to a safe in-person return in the Fall of 2021.

Bee Club Website

Current Student Spotlights



Featured Current Student Profile

Ornella Musinguzi is part of the 2020 PLC cohort and is from Uganda, Kampala. She is a freshman at CU studying Political Science with a minor in Leadership Studies and Philosophy. Ornella currently works for the admissions department in the Center for Academic Success and Engagement as a student assistant.

Before joining CU, she was worried about the culture shock so decided to find communities that stood for what she believed. Ornella decided to join PLC, the Miramontes Arts and Science Program and the Multicultural Leadership Scholars Program so she could always feel like she had a 'tribe' at CU. She also joined the CU Cultural Events Board and is currently a budgetary member. She also writes articles for HerCampus CU and feels very connected to the therapeutic value of writing and art. Ornella feels most alive when interacting with people from different places, cultures, or interests than hers which is why she decided to be a part of very different programs. She is also a board member and co-founder of the Miramontes Arts and Science volunteer club. Ornella also volunteers for the Conference on World Affairs Racism in America Committee which has allowed her to really diversify her understanding of diversity, meet amazing members of the Boulder community, and interact with my understanding of race in ways she had never imagined.

In the near future, she is hoping to get a head start on opening up an NGO that caters to new mothers and low-income mothers in the Thornton-Northglenn area that she is currently doing research for, courtesy of a PLC alum!



Featured Current Student Profile

Meet Danny Knowles! Danny is a junior in the PLC 2018 cohort from Boulder, Colorado. He is studying Finance and Management with minors in Political Science and Leadership Studies. This summer, he will be interning at Deloitte in Denver and hopes to attend law school following graduation.

Outside of PLC, Danny likes to explore his passions for business and politics, as well as how their intersection can be leveraged to improve lives and make a difference in the world. He is currently a Senator in CU Student Government, a Representative for Leeds Student Government, a student representative on the Frascona Award committee, and a member of the Leeds Honors Program. Previously, Danny served as the Service Chair for Alpha Kappa Psi professional coed business fraternity, as well as both the VP of Operations and the VP of Engagements for Leeds Consulting Group where he landed clients such as Google, a global nonprofit, and a tech startup. He was formerly the CFO and co-founder of a business he started last spring called GyftCO, which aimed to support local businesses during COVID-19 shutdowns by allowing them to list their operating status and sell e-gift cards to the community. Last summer and fall, Danny was also a Senior Finance Intern for John Hickenlooper's U.S. Senate Campaign and is hoping to get more involved in politics in the future.

In addition to these involvements, Danny enjoys volunteering at the Harvest of Hope Food Pantry and the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless. He is also an avid sports fan and loves spending time outdoors skiing, golfing, fishing, gardening, and hiking.

Reconnect



Class Champion Initiative

To support our commitment to the reengagement of our Alumni Community, we are increasing efforts from our Class Champions. These Champions will be striving to reconnect with all of our alumni, pushing out information about the program, current students, involvement opportunities, event invitations and much more!

If you have any questions about who your Champion is, or if you have any interest in becoming a Class Champion, please contact emily.allen-1@colorado.edu.

**Become a PLC
Mentor**

**Join the Alumni
Board**

**Make a Donation
to PLC**

Click here to update your contact information with us!

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

The Presidents Leadership Class condemns the May 25th killing of George Floyd and the deaths of every other unarmed life taken by police brutality, including Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, David McAtee, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others before them, and also condemns the violence committed against peaceful protesters by police. Our program supports the catalyzed response seen around the country by peaceful protesters demanding justice for black lives lost and advocating for the dismantling of systemic racism. Additionally, PLC supports our black, indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC) students and alumni and will continue to do so.

The Presidents Leadership Class at CU Boulder acknowledges that the University sits upon land within the territories of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho peoples. Further, we acknowledge that 48 contemporary tribal nations are historically tied to the lands that make up the state of Colorado.

You can see all statements issued PLC students, faculty, and staff by visiting the PLC homepage here - <https://www.colorado.edu/plc/>.

Go Buffs!

www.colorado.edu/plc