



**COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES**  
EARTH • ENERGY • ENVIRONMENT

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

April 13, 2016

Dear President Obama,

We are excited to participate in #uifresh (University Innovation Freshmen), an initiative spearheaded by the University Innovation Fellows program as a means to expand the participation and retention of incoming first-year STEM students. The initiative will help young students see problems as opportunities that should be approached with fresh eyes and an entrepreneurial mindset.

As part of the initiative, University Innovation Fellows will work to integrate entrepreneurship, design thinking, creativity and innovation into the freshman experience. This will be done as part of orientation, a single class, or a series of classes that help students solve real-world problems and connect first-year students to peer communities of makers and innovators in STEM.

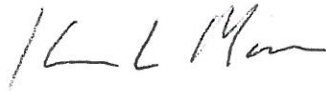
The initiative was developed in response to findings published by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology in a report titled "Engage to Excel: Producing One Million Additional College Graduates With Degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics." The report indicates that 60% of U.S. freshmen (in aggregate) who arrive to college intending to major in STEM change majors to non-STEM disciplines. The report also cites the importance of a student experience that is both intellectually and personally engaging and fosters "identification with a STEM field." This can be established by connecting freshmen with a community of STEM professionals, and fostering meaningful relationships with both peers and instructors.

University Innovation Fellows and their teams will work with their faculty, administrators and staff to implement fun and engaging experiential learning opportunities that expose 100% of the incoming freshmen class to the institution's community of makers and innovators, with the goal of collectively reducing the national percentage of STEM attrition by half in five years.

We believe that early exposure to entrepreneurship, innovation, creativity and design thinking are powerful tools to engage and retain STEM students. We are excited to work with the University Innovation Fellows, an initiative of the NSF-funded National Center for Engineering Pathways to Innovation (Epicenter) and a soon-to-be program of the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (d.school) at Stanford University. We believe efforts such as #uifresh will contribute to enhancing STEM attraction and retention, ultimately meeting U.S. workforce needs and strengthening our national competitiveness.

Sincerely,

Paul C. Johnson, Ph.D.  
President and Professor



Kevin Moore, Ph.D.  
Dean of the College of Engineering and  
Computational Sciences



Corey Brugh  
University Innovation Fellow



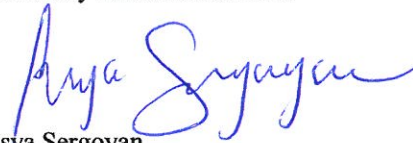
Brent Waller, Ph.D.  
Director of the Department of Residence Life



Trevor Clevenger  
University Innovation Fellow



Colin Terry, Ph.D., ATSD  
Director of the Center of Academic Services and  
Advising



Asya Sergoyan  
University Innovation Fellow



Leslie Light  
Director of EPICS



Mallory Britz  
University Innovation Fellow



Mark B. Mondry  
Director of Engineering and Technology  
Management Program



Nick Yuan  
University Innovation Fellow



Jenifer Blacklock, Ph.D.  
Assistant Department Head of Mechanical  
Engineering



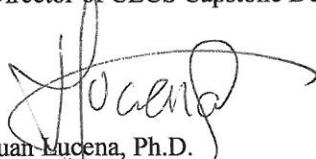
Daniel Dickason  
University Innovation Fellow



Jered Dean  
Director of CECS Capstone Design Program



Tara Maestas  
University Innovation Fellow



Juan Lucena, Ph.D.  
Director of Humanitarian Engineering