

Powered by PeopleGrove, Colorado State University Global helps build talent pipeline for Colorado's economy



LOCATION

Aurora, CO

TOTAL ENROLLMENT

20,000

PROGRAM

- 15 bachelor's degree programs
- 15 master's degree programs
- 11 undergraduate certificate programs
- 7 graduate certificate programs

The Colorado Department of Higher Education believes that the state's future economic vitality depends on increasing the number of its citizens with postsecondary education. As such, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education [issued their strategic Master Plan](#) in 2017, declaring that the state "simply cannot afford an undereducated citizenry and an underfunded higher education system." Their goal: achieve 66% statewide postsecondary attainment of Coloradans 25 to 34 years old by 2025.

Colorado State University Global—the first and only 100% online, fully accredited public university in the United States—seeks to increase bachelor degree attainment within the state. The university primarily serves the working adult student population, with an approximate student median age of 35 years old and focuses on providing an affordable education leading to workplace success, and return on investment.

According to the Colorado Workforce Development Council's [2020 Talent Pipeline Report](#), only 57.6% of the adult population ages 25 to 34 years old in the state have postsecondary credential attainment. Furthermore, attainment levels are not equal: Only 29.9% of Hispanics, the fastest-growing population in Colorado, and 41.3% of Black or African Americans have a certificate or degree, as compared to 64.2% of Whites.

Switching Platforms

“We’re focused on making sure that all of our [academic] programs are career relevant,” said Jerid Counterman, Associate Director of Student Resources at CSU Global. “We try to tie them back to industry, and the best way to do that is having an understanding of how we get students from their university application, to their first class, to graduation—and making sure they have those relevant skills and knowledge. That way, before they graduate, they’ve already thought about their career and how they’ll use that degree.”

CSU Global knows the ropes of offering a quality, online-only education. Its bachelor’s and master’s programs earned top rankings by the U.S. News & World Report, and its workforce was already partly-remote or full-time remote well before 2020.

Because CSU Global is a fully online, remote learning environment, university staff are accustomed to meeting the needs of students in a virtual space. But the desire for continuous improvement led their team to PeopleGrove.

“We needed to address usability issues for our staff,” recalls Jerid. “The old portal was fine and functional, but executing on certain critical tasks hinged on that person’s ability to be able to code. If you wanted to make quick changes or stand up a new resource, you’re kind of at the mercy of an IT department, which may already be taxed by urgent projects.”

Jerid and team needed a better way to “create, customize and control” student resources, and worked with PeopleGrove to get an online platform up and running that met the needs of students and staff alike.

“When we talk about optimizing the student experience, it’s about asking, ‘How do all these components match together?’ to make the completed puzzle at the end of their degree,” said Jerid. “That way, students aren’t waiting until they’re about to graduate to seek out career services.”

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Jerid Counterman,
Associate Director of Student
Resources, CSU Global

An Integrated Approach to Career Coaching

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Using their PeopleGrove platform, CSU Global created a fully integrated career services experience. Students have a single destination for career coaching, resume reviews, alumni-to-student mentorship, a resource library, a career discussion forum, and affinity groups.

1 : 1 Coaching + Guidance



☆ Career Coaching

All coaches are adjunct faculty with industry-relevant experience.

☆ Resume Review

Fully asynchronous. Students can handpick their reviewer.

Discussion Forums



☆ Discussion Forum

Dedicated space for faculty & staff, alumni and students to trade tips and information on career-related topics.

☆ Groups

Communication tools supporting clubs & associations, honor societies, and alumni.

Self-Serve



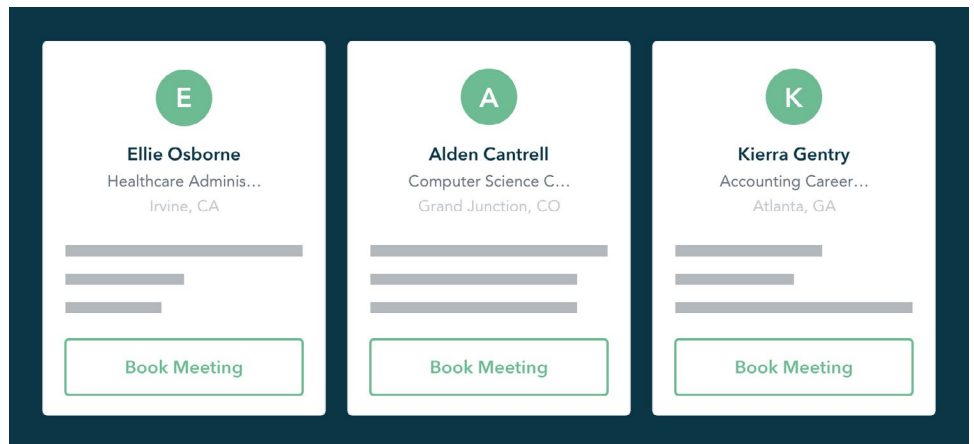
☆ Resources

On-demand library of job search tools. Includes specialized sections for students with disabilities and military veterans.

Career Coaching

All of CSU Global's designated career coaches are adjunct faculty. "Where our service really shines is that we're able to identify career coaches who have direct industry experience within every program of study," Jerid said.

CSU Global uses PeopleGrove's [Advising tool](#) to facilitate career coaching appointments between faculty and students. Jerid appreciates that coaches can easily share details about their background and experience on their profile, so that a student looking to book an appointment can browse and select the person most suited to their needs.



There's also a quality assurance component to their 1:1 career coaching sessions—sessions are recorded and evaluated on a monthly basis. Within these evaluations, staff look for trends among questions students are asking, as well as potential opportunities for coaches to increase the value of the service for their students.

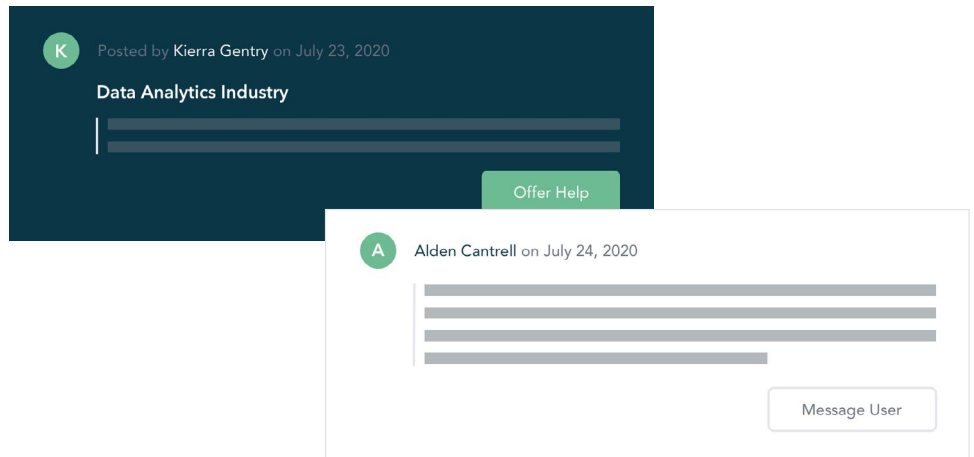
Resume Review

Another service CSU Global offers through its PeopleGrove platform is Resume Review. Available to both current students and alumni, reviews happen asynchronously: Students can browse and select their own reviewer, and receive feedback within a few days.

Students additionally have the option of logging notes, sharing files, and setting goals within each private message thread in their platform inbox.

Discussion Forum

CSU Global's platform also hosts a "Career Q&A" discussion forum, where students can ask (and answer) questions. Discussion threads run the gamut, with topics on everything from switching programs of study, to certifications, self-assessments, the job market...the list goes on.



Groups

CSU Global hosts 14 different Groups in their platform to support clubs and associations, honor societies, and student veterans. (CSU Global is a GI Bill Approved School, with approximately 14% of its student population being active duty military, veterans, and their dependents according to 2019 data.) Each Group has its own membership listing, discussion board, resource library, and event listing to drive engagement among members. Admins can also send bulk email to Group members.

Resource Library

Students get access to a wealth of career success content via the self-serve Resources section of the platform. For more generalized support, students can explore on-demand resources like the "Job Search Toolkit," which includes a career exploration guide.

"As students are coming in and selecting their major or program of study, we want to make sure they've taken time to go through some kind of self-assessment or self-exploration, and that it happens early on. It's geared toward the early stages of the student experience." said Jerid.

CSU Global purposefully incorporates these same self-help resources into its curricula. "We build assignments around that career component. For example, within a given course, there might be two assignments for a student to consider how this particular class relates to their personal career objectives. Through that exercise or deliverable, they'll be asked to explore a specific resource or area within Career Services on the platform."

Steady Growth



Total Users (Cumulative)

↑ **49%** YoY

(includes Faculty & Staff, Employers, Career Coaches, Alumni, and Students)



Number of Messages Sent

↑ **80%** YoY

(among Faculty & Staff, Career Coaches, Alumni, and Students)



Average user rating:

4.68 / 5



554

Total Users
Reviews to Date

Expanding Career Services

A Cross-Departmental Effort

In parallel with ongoing additions to their platform, a new cross-departmental initiative is in the works at CSU Global. This project, led by CSU Global's President, brings together representatives from Financial Services, Student Success (Advising), Disability Services, Transcript Evaluation and Registrar Services.

"We've always had these separate departments that each own a different component of the student experience, and each one had separate senior leadership oversight as well," said Jerid. "The approach we've taken in the past has been siloed."

Siloed operations are quickly becoming a thing of the past as these teams formally come together. With one common goal—empowering students in their career pursuits at every available touchpoint—Jerid stated that their team starts with the ideal successful student, who makes it from application to graduation. "We ask ourselves what that roadmap looks like for them. Where do those interactions with the university exist today? It's about identifying where those overlaps and intersects are between the different departments, and how we create a more holistic experience for the student, instead of just fulfilling our one part and then calling it done."

One department notably absent from the committee is Enrollment, and Jerid shared that their participation is imminent. "Enrollment sets the stage," he said. "The counselors spend a relatively short amount of time with students, but the relationships are long-lasting. Getting them involved in the roadmapping is a big component."

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Jerid Counterman

Jerid says that working with larger, tangential departments, that have more day-to-day interactions with students, is key. "As an example, when a student is meeting with an advisor—instead of just saying, 'let's get a degree plan for you and map out your courses,' they can take a step back and say, 'How does this conversation relate to your military benefits?'"

Before implementation of PeopleGrove, Jerid observed that the university diligently promoted its services to students, but needed a better software solution to proactively engage with students and the entire university in career development. After fully implementing a cross-departmental strategy that aligns with the student lifecycle, Jerid expects that their PeopleGrove platform will only continue to expand and grow the resource-rich experience the students are getting, and help students utilize services on a more timely basis.

**Discover how Advising by
PeopleGrove can help you scale
support for students and alumni.**

Visit peoplegrove.com/tour/advising to learn more.



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