

Project Description

This project empowers underrepresented students with a budding interest for cycling and reinvents the cycling team. Cycling is one of the most popular activities at Colorado College, and thus deserves a welcoming and fun community for all. While Colorado College Club Cycling has provided some of this community to its members, financial and cultural barriers to entry make the cycling inaccessible for many students. Mountain biking is an expensive sport and many students feel the team does not accommodate beginners' skill level in its activities, rides, and trips. Cycling is also a sport dominated by white men, and there is very little representation from people of color or female-identifying riders.

Therefore, we propose to use the Life of the Mind to purchase a small fleet of entry-level mountain bikes for students to use, increasing the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) of mountain biking on campus. We will use this fleet to launch a new inclusive beginner mountain biking program in partnership with Outdoor Education, the Butler Center, and the Bridge Scholars Program. By investing in our mission, Life of the Mind would do more than contribute funds to new mountain bikes. Your support makes it possible to reinvent the cycling club by creating lasting partnerships across campus and fostering more equitable engagement with students, empowering them to flourish.

The cycling team would partner with a large bike manufacturer, such as Giant or Specialized, and include them in our mission. In the long-term, we will assemble a fleet of 10+ bikes, but to get this program off the ground, we will use Life of the Mind funds to acquire a size small, two mediums, and a large bike at a discount or at cost. Students could use the bikes for short-term use, such as on team trips or group rides, or for long-term use, especially for students who cannot afford their own bikes. There are several options for storage: Outdoor Education, one of Campus Safety's underutilized sheds, or in the general campus bike shed by Mathias Hall.

In addition to providing bikes, we will create a robust, sustainable beginner program with skills clinics and lessons to encourage students who are new to the sport to give it a try. These clinics will include an introduction to mountain biking, basic skills and techniques, and safe riding practices. The cycling team would partner with the Butler Center, the Bridge Scholars program, and Outdoor Education on designing this program to ensure we are fulfilling the goals of IDEA, and then would execute the inaugural program next fall. The program would involve one training course in the fall for current team members interested in becoming instructors, two beginner clinics in the fall, and one in the spring of each year. Finally, we will establish a schedule of weekly group rides for beginners during the early fall and late spring led by our accredited instructors.

Bolstering the team's leadership capacity will be crucial for the continuity and sustainability of the project's success, and this loaner bike fleet also represents a commitment to organizational excellence. Leadership and management is something that I am very passionate about and excited to practice more of, and I am in the process of implementing a more robust leadership structure for the cycling team. We established a formal officer structure, wrote by-laws, and will consult with Outdoor Education, the Butler Center, and professors in the business, political science, and sociology departments on how to establish a capable organization. We will use the beginner program as a proxy for establishing a succession plan. This will keep team members and leaders enthusiastic and industrious about the cycling team and its campus outreach for years to come, creating the most effective impact.

Giveback to CC

The principal giveback to the CC community will be the fleet of mountain bikes to launch the accessible and inclusive beginner clinics and rides backed by Outdoor Education and the Butler Center. We also plan to market this program as a means to further increase the IDEA of the team (and, consequently, the college) and promote the partnership between our bike sponsor and Colorado College.

I am a former Catalyst columnist and I know the power of journalism and story on campus. I would write a short-form article in The Catalyst about the new fleet and beginner programs as part of a bigger story about deconstructing the elitism in mountain biking and redefining the team's mission towards a strong community rooted in IDEA in a long-form Colorado College Outdoor Journal piece.

To complement our internal marketing, the cycling team's partnership with a bike company would represent a fruitful opportunity to contribute to CC admissions. We could display the CC cycling team as an industry player dedicated to inclusion, while also showcasing CC's adventurous spirit of the mountain west by partnering on a video that the bike company's talented marketing team could produce. This video would feature our cycling team with their bikes making an impact in expanding the sport of mountain biking. If prospective students interested in mountain biking saw this caliber of collaboration, capability, and compassion in CC's cycling team through this video, this could attract a more inclusive community of cyclists to the college, separating us from other cycling schools.

Significance

The bike team at Colorado College serves as a microcosm for the larger issues of inequality and exclusion that exist within our community. At a school with the highest median household income in the country, the bike team is largely composed of affluent students who can afford high-end equipment and expensive travel. However, this financial divide creates a barrier to entry that excludes many students.

Additionally, the bike team, like many outdoor communities, suffers from a significant gender gap. Women are highly underrepresented on the team, and many feel intimidated by a culture that is often seen as male-dominated and adrenaline-fueled.

Finally, people of color are significantly underrepresented on the bike team and in the broader outdoors community at Colorado College. The outdoors has historically been a space that white people feel entitled to, with the BIPOC community left out of the conversation. The college's third goal in its anti-racism commitment is to "Invest in student antiracism resources and efforts" by "provid[ing] grants for students to work on specific action steps for the antiracism initiative." This project would allow us to bring white students and people of color together in the outdoors and redefine the space, not in terms of integration, but inclusion.

This initiative also aligns with President Richardson's mission to create a more equitable and inclusive community at Colorado College. The bike team is committed to addressing these issues through this new initiative that offers beginner loaner bikes and an inclusive beginner program. The execution of this project will allow the cycling team to create new and long-lasting partnerships with organizations and departments across campus. The team will foster more diverse connections within the student body and reinvent the team with an enhanced organizational capacity that will ensure the sustainability of the loaner bike program and an inclusive cycling team for years to come.