

Why CU

CHOOSING ADVENTURE: PROPOSAL

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Group 1

ABOUT



Executive summary –

As a group, we focused our efforts on attracting out-of-state students from large urban environments who are seeking a high-quality education in a diverse and natural setting. These students value an immersive, socially engaging, and welcoming college experience. To effectively engage this target audience, our strategy centers on leveraging CU Boulder's underutilized social media platforms. We propose creating carefully curated video content that highlights the vibrancy of campus life, the dynamic social atmosphere, and the stunning natural surroundings that make CU Boulder unique. This content will be complemented by visually compelling, poster-style advertisements designed to captivate and inspire our audience across these platforms. By showcasing CU's exceptional offerings in an engaging and impactful way, our campaign aims to foster strong emotional connections with prospective students. Building on the recognition gained through social media, we will further expand our strategy with innovative YouTube advertisements that emphasize CU Boulder's distinctive appeal.

ABOUT



These ads will spotlight the university's vibrant campus culture, breathtaking natural environment, and steadfast commitment to academic excellence. Additionally, the content will highlight ways students can leverage CU Boulder's resources and environment to maximize their college experience, both academically and personally. This multi-platform approach is designed to position CU Boulder as the ideal destination for students looking for a transformative college experience—one that balances academic rigor, personal growth, and an unparalleled quality of life. Within this proposal, you will find campaign mockups and a detailed breakdown of the persuasive tactics we employed to engage and influence our target audience effectively.

TARGET AUDIENCE



Our target audience consists of out-of-state students from urban or big-city environments who seek a high-quality education in a diverse, natural setting while desiring an immersive, socially engaging, and welcoming college experience. We chose to focus on this specific group because urban college life often comes with significant challenges, including high living expenses, steep tuition costs, air pollution, a fast-paced lifestyle, and safety concerns. These issues can create a less conducive environment for students to thrive personally and academically. The challenges of urban living are well-documented. For instance, in Sara Chernikoff's article, "More Than Half a Million People Left New York in 2022: Here's Where They Resettled," statistics highlight that many individuals leave cities like New York in search of a better quality of life and lower living costs. Similarly, Samantha Sparks' "Student Life: Challenges University Students Face While Living in the City" emphasizes that students often desire safer,

TARGET AUDIENCE

more affordable, and slower-paced living environments where they can build meaningful connections and embrace new experiences. These insights shaped the vision of our campaign. We recognized that students navigating their final years of high school in urban areas often aspire to break away from the constraints of city life. They seek opportunities to explore a different lifestyle—one that is more balanced, enriching, and connected to nature.

The University of Colorado Boulder stands out as an ideal choice for these students. With its stunning natural surroundings, welcoming community, and diverse opportunities, CU Boulder offers a college experience that contrasts sharply with the challenges of urban living. About Boulder's "Top 7 Reasons Why Students Choose CU Boulder" highlights many of these unique benefits, including access to outdoor activities, a vibrant campus culture, and the city of Boulder's high quality of life. These factors collectively make CU Boulder a compelling option for students seeking an inspiring, transformative college experience outside of the urban norm.

GUIDING PERSUASION TACTICS

PRIMING

“Priming occurs when exposure to an initial stimulus increases the salience and accessibility of thoughts and feelings related to that stimulus to build an automatic response to a later stimulus.”

ELM- PERIPHERAL

“Examines the message quickly or focuses on simple cues to help decide to accept or reject the advocated position”



GUIDING PERSUASION TACTICS

FEAR APPEAL

“A fear-arousing message contains two basic elements: threat and efficacy information, or a problem and solution.” (M. Perloff, 304)

GUILT APPEAL

“Research suggests that guilt appeals can work if the message (a) induces empathy, (b) instills a sense of social, normative responsibility to help, ...” (M. Perloff, 304)



GUIDING PERSUASION TACTICS

SYMBOLIC ATTITUDE APPROACH

“Symbolic attitude approach emphasized that attitudes are dominated by emotional reactions, sweeping sentiments, and powerful prejudices. Emotion is attached to every aspect of the concept.” (Burns, Cht 4, 7)

FEAR THEN RELIEF

“it capitalizes on the element of surprise, which succeeds in disrupting people’s normal defenses.” (M. Perloff, 365)



TACTICS IN ACTION

The Symbolic Attitude Approach and Elaboration Likelihood Model in Our Campaign

Early in our project, we identified the University of Colorado Boulder's key selling points as its vibrant culture and the breathtaking natural beauty of its location. Recognizing the emotional resonance these attributes hold for prospective students, we strategically chose persuasion methods that focus on evoking strong emotions and influencing decisions through subtle yet impactful cues. This understanding guided our integration of the Symbolic Attitude Approach and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as the foundation of our campaign. The Symbolic Attitude Approach highlights how attitudes are shaped by emotional reactions, sweeping sentiments, and deeply ingrained associations, even allowing for seemingly illogical responses. Perloff (2017) notes, "Each of the attributes evokes feelings, which, once activated, spread out to all the related cognitive nodes" (p. 84). This underscores the influential power of symbols in shaping perceptions and behaviors. At CU Boulder, iconic symbols such as the Buffalo logo and the cultural momentum of "Coach Prime" and the football team's recent success embody this principle. These symbols evoke excitement, pride, and a sense of belonging while triggering an emotional response like FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Prospective students, particularly those from urban environments, may feel drawn to be part of such a lively and fun atmosphere. Beyond athletics, Colorado's broader symbolic identity—reflected in its progressive reputation and values of diversity and inclusion—resonates strongly with students seeking a welcoming and accepting community. The natural beauty of Boulder's mountainous surroundings further symbolizes adventure, exploration, and tranquility, offering a stark contrast to the fast-paced urban environments where many of our target audience reside.

TACTICS IN ACTION

These physical and cultural symbols position CU Boulder as a unique and highly desirable destination for students envisioning a college experience that balances personal growth, academic success, and meaningful connections. As Posecznick (2017) describes in *Selling Hope and College: Merit, Markets, and Recruitment in an Unranked School*, prospective students were encouraged to see Ravenwood College as integral to achieving their aspirations. Similarly, CU Boulder's emphasis on symbolic messaging helps students imagine their own future within the university's vibrant and adventurous environment. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) further informed our approach to message design and delivery. ELM explains that persuasive messages are processed through two routes: the central route, which involves detailed analysis and critical evaluation, and the peripheral route, which relies on quick assessments based on cues like visuals, emotions, and source attractiveness (Perloff, 2017). Our campaign deliberately focused on the peripheral route. By leveraging emotionally engaging content such as compelling visuals, music, and symbolic imagery, we aimed to capture attention and evoke immediate attitude shifts. This approach was especially relevant to our target audience, as "in environments where individuals are not highly motivated or able to process detailed information, peripheral cues such as source attractiveness, credibility, or emotional appeals often determine attitudes" (Bitner, 1985). Elements of our campaign like our video adds with short and entertaining bursts of video and up beat music allowed us to trigger this peripheral processing so that our audience might be directly influenced in their decision. Some other examples of this include our use of brief and relevant statistics to elicit an attitude response through the peripheral route. By combining the emotional depth of the Symbolic Attitude Approach with the efficiency of ELM's peripheral processing, our campaign was designed to align CU Boulder's key attributes with the values and aspirations of our audience, creating a persuasive and compelling narrative.

TACTICS IN ACTION

Addressing Affordability: Fear/Guilt Appeals and the Fear-Then-Relief Technique

Affordability is one of the most significant factors influencing students' decisions, particularly for those considering universities outside their home states or in large urban areas. To address this concern, we employed both fear/guilt appeals and the fear-then-relief technique as key persuasive strategies.

We began by drawing attention to the high tuition costs associated with universities located in metropolitan regions. This comparison was designed to evoke a sense of financial concern and urgency, encouraging students to reevaluate their assumptions about affordability and value. By highlighting the potential long-term financial burden, we created an emotional connection that made the issue of cost both tangible and urgent.

However, we also recognized that even CU Boulder's tuition of approximately \$30,000 remains a significant investment for many students and their families. To alleviate this concern, we strategically transitioned to a solution-based approach using the fear-then-relief technique. Following the presentation of financial challenges, we quickly introduced CU Boulder's extensive scholarship programs and financial aid options as practical solutions. This transition helped shift the emotional tone from stress and uncertainty to relief and optimism, showcasing the university's commitment to making education accessible.

By framing affordability concerns alongside actionable solutions, we positioned CU Boulder as an institution that both understands and prioritizes students' needs. This narrative reinforced the university's value and credibility while making it a more realistic and appealing choice for prospective students.

CAMPAIGN

Our campaign vision was to strategically harness CU Boulder's social media platforms to effectively connect with our target audience, utilizing insights gained through comprehensive research. This vision inspired the creation of two YouTube and TikTok videos, specifically designed to align with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) Peripheral Processing approach and the Symbolic Attitude Approach. These videos were crafted to be visually engaging and dynamic, showcasing CU Boulder's vibrant campus life and breathtaking natural surroundings. Simultaneously, they conveyed essential information about the university's academic excellence and educational value in a concise and impactful manner. A key component of our campaign was the development of a presentation tailored directly to our target audience. This presentation integrated all of our persuasion strategies, creating a visually stimulating and cohesive experience. By combining eye-catching visuals, relevant statistics, and persuasive messaging, we effectively highlighted the unique advantages of CU Boulder. The overall presentation adhered to the ELM Peripheral Processing model, designed to evoke positive emotions associated with the bandwagon effect. This approach encouraged our audience to perceive CU Boulder as an exciting, welcoming, and desirable choice for their undergraduate studies. By strategically blending emotional appeal with tangible evidence, our campaign successfully motivated prospective students to envision themselves as part of the CU Boulder community.

PRESENTATION



One of the main components of our campaign was the presentation, which served as a cohesive platform to integrate and showcase all of our persuasion strategies tailored specifically to our target audience. This presentation was the result of extensive research into the preferences, values, and needs of our audience, combined with meticulous design to create visually appealing and effective slides that resonated with them. The presentation was carefully structured to flow seamlessly through each materialistic point, aligning with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) Peripheral Processing approach. By focusing on engaging visuals, concise messaging, and emotionally driven content, we aimed to persuade our audience effectively and leave a lasting impression. The following sections detail each persuasion method utilized in the presentation, demonstrating how these strategies were employed to captivate and influence our target audience, ultimately motivating them to consider CU Boulder as their ideal choice for higher education.

TARGET AUDIENCE—

Our primary objective was to gain a deep understanding of our target audience and identify what they value most. Through extensive research, we uncovered key factors that influence their decision-making process, including affordability, student outcomes, quality of life, and location. These insights allowed us to narrow our focus and structure our campaign to address these critical areas effectively. In addition, we carefully analyzed our target audience's media consumption patterns to determine the most effective channels for engagement. This research guided us to tailor our campaign content specifically to platforms where our audience spends the most time. The data indicated that short-form, dynamic video content—similar to YouTube and TikTok formats—would be the most engaging and impactful medium to reach them. By aligning our campaign with these insights, we ensured our messaging would resonate with the audience while maximizing visibility and engagement.

	YouTube	TikTok	Instagram	Snapchat	Facebook	Twitter	Twitch	WhatsApp	Reddit	Tumblr
Total	95	67	62	59	32	23	20	17	14	5
Boys	97	60	55	54	31	24	26	17	20	4
Girls	92	73	69	64	34	22	13	18	8	6
White	94	62	58	59	32	20	20	10	16	5
Black	94	81	69	59	34	31	18	19	9	4
Hispanic	95	71	68	62	32	28	22	29	14	6
Ages 13-14	94	61	45	51	23	15	17	16	8	3
15-17	95	71	73	65	39	29	22	18	19	7
Urban	95	71	70	58	40	28	15	29	13	6
Suburban	94	64	61	58	24	24	24	16	17	5
Rural	95	67	58	62	43	19	17	11	11	5
<i>Household income</i>										
< \$30,000	93	72	64	60	44	26	17	19	10	4
\$30K-\$74,999	94	68	62	57	39	24	19	19	13	7
\$75,000+	95	65	62	60	27	22	21	17	16	4

SLOGAN

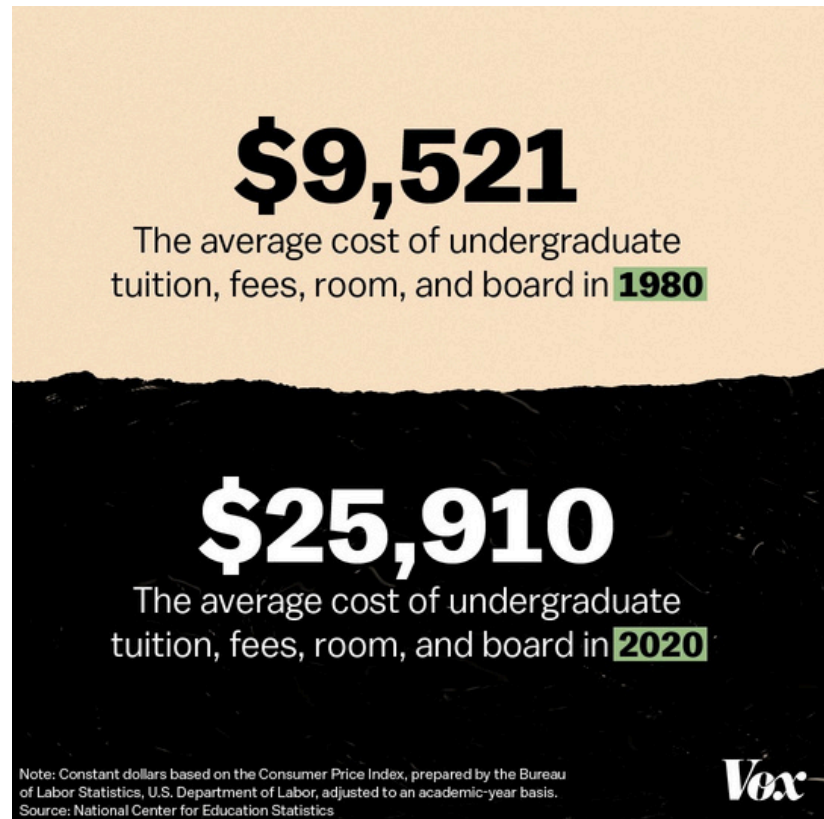
Through our research into the target audience, our group decided to modify CU's slogan to: "Be Free. Be Adventurous. Be Inspired." This approach is guided by the ELM Peripheral Processing Model, as we aimed for the slogan to be quickly absorbed and resonate with the audience on an emotional level.

The slogan was intentionally crafted to challenge the audience's perception of staying in a large city versus coming to CU Boulder. By prompting them to reflect on whether they truly feel "free" in an urban environment, we emphasized the unique sense of freedom and adventure that CU Boulder offers. Our research revealed that qualities such as exploration, adventure, and inspiration are highly valued by our target audience, making this slogan both relevant and impactful.



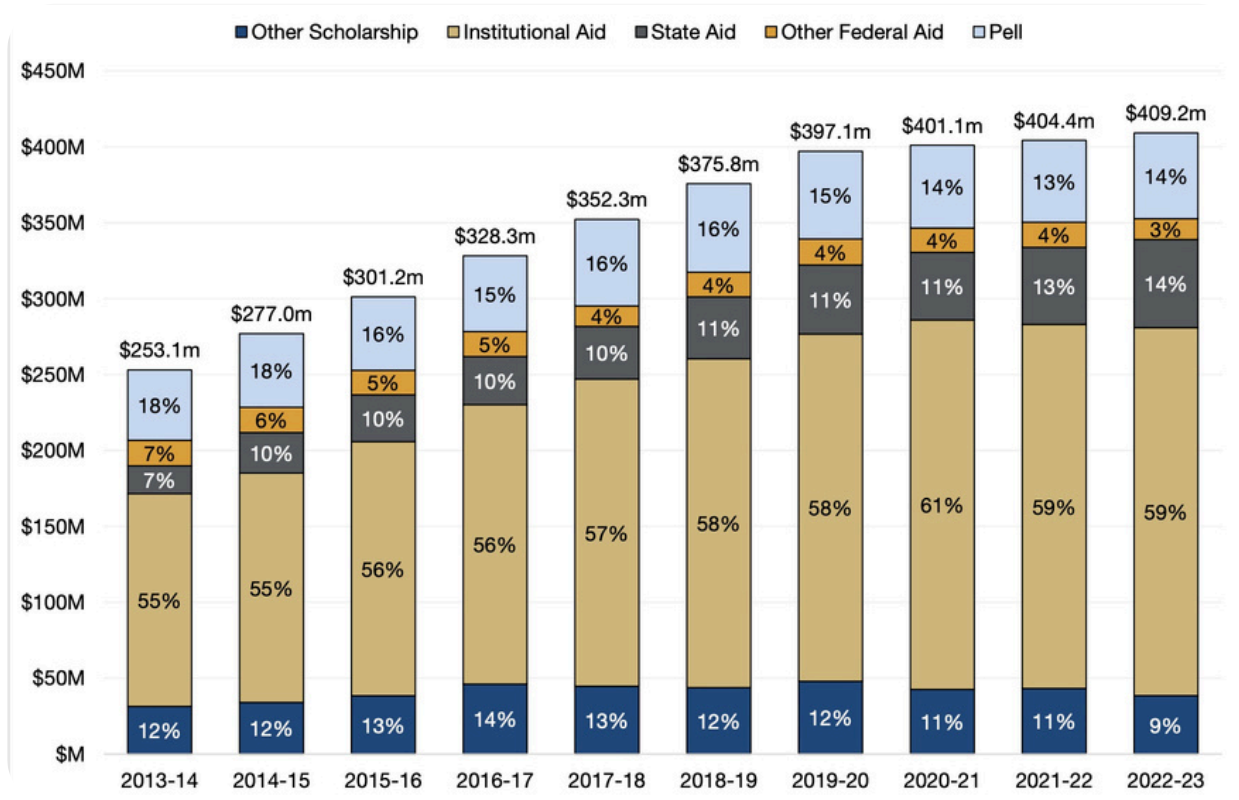
AFFORDABILITY —

For many prospective students, affordability is a critical factor in deciding where to pursue higher education. The cost of college can seem overwhelming, especially for students coming from urban environments where tuition and living expenses tend to be higher. CU Boulder recognizes these concerns and offers a financially accessible alternative, making it possible for students to achieve academic excellence without undue financial strain. The rising cost of higher education over the last few decades has created significant barriers for students. Urban universities often come with price tags exceeding \$50,000 annually, creating significant barriers for students and their families. The comparison of historical college costs highlights how students today face far greater financial challenges than previous the average student loan debt upon graduation is \$37,000, with many borrowers facing monthly repayments of over \$300. These statistics illustrate the financial burden that higher education can impose, particularly in high-cost metropolitan areas. CU Boulder's tuition rates present a stark contrast. Out-of-state students benefit from comparatively lower costs at \$38,000 per year, while in-state tuition stands at approximately \$12,500 annually. Paired with CU Boulder's extensive financial aid offerings, these figures demonstrate the university's commitment to affordability.



SCHOLARSHIPS

CU Boulder further solidifies its commitment to affordability through a wide array of scholarship programs that cater to diverse student needs. Each year, CU Boulder awards over \$50 million in scholarships, ensuring that both academic excellence and financial need are recognized and rewarded, helping students from all backgrounds access higher education.



CU Boulder’s scholarships are designed to make a meaningful impact on students’ financial situations:

Merit-Based Awards: Programs like the Presidential Scholarship provide \$55,000 over four years to high-achieving out-of-state students, helping reduce the financial gap for academically talented individuals.

Need-Based Support: Tailored scholarships focus on assisting students from low-income families, removing barriers to attendance and enabling success.

Specialized Programs: Scholarships such as the Chancellor’s Achievement Scholarship reward leadership and extracurricular accomplishments, showcasing CU Boulder’s holistic approach to student success.

TESTIMONY

The testimonials we incorporated into our campaign were carefully chosen to align with key statistics and resonate with our target audience. These quotes highlighted topics such as “Life in Boulder,” emphasizing the area’s stunning natural surroundings, vibrant social and nightlife scene, and abundant outdoor experiences. By including these authentic testimonials in our presentation, we aimed to engage our audience through the peripheral route of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). This strategic use of concise, relatable testimonials facilitated peripheral processing by allowing our audience to quickly absorb and emotionally connect with the information. Additionally, the social implications of these testimonials leveraged the bandwagon effect, wherein individuals are influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of their peers.

NOT JUST STUDENTS

8.2 MILLION PEOPLE MOVED STATES



TOP 20 MOST BEAUTIFUL CAMPUS

Utopia

- “It is a great school and the most beautiful campus I’ve ever seen. The city of Boulder is a small utopia.”
- “It was this totally new environment that I had never experienced and I was mesmerized by it. Soon after, I realized that a new, amazing environment like Boulder was exactly what I wanted.”



TOP 20 PARTY SCHOOL

Party

- “Yes we’re a party school, but we’ve also got geniuses.”
- “since 1968, ranked either the top or one of the top party schools in the country.”



TOP 10 UNIVERSITIES FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Experience

- “There is good skiing nearby, mountain biking, rock climbing, hiking, running, snowshoeing and many outdoor sports plus a wonderful recreation center with indoor activities, pool, racquetball, squash, indoor pool, indoor running, gym, etc.”

TESTIMONY

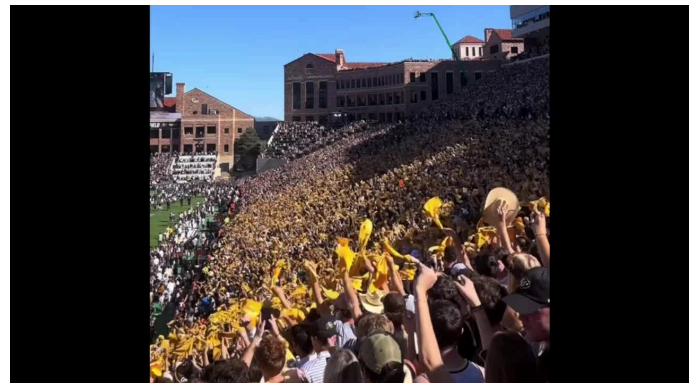
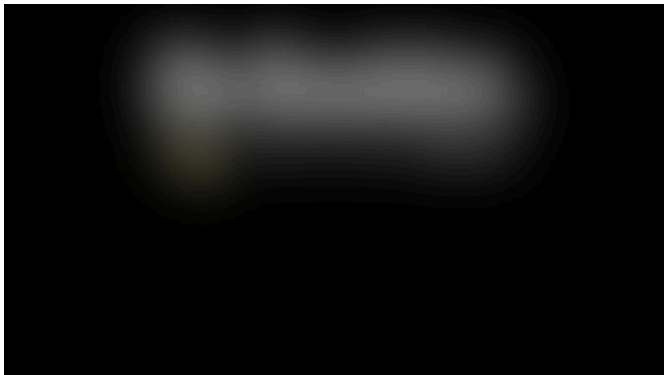
Observing the positive experiences shared by others creates a desire to align with those perspectives, reducing cognitive dissonance and fostering a shift in attitude toward favoring CU Boulder as an undergraduate choice. By combining the persuasive power of testimonials with the bandwagon effect, we effectively encouraged our audience to view CU Boulder as an ideal environment for their college experience. These carefully curated testimonials played a pivotal role in reinforcing the campaign's message, fostering a sense of community, and building enthusiasm around CU Boulder's unique offerings.

QUALITY

- Top 5 places where college students want to live post graduation** 
- 5th best state for education** 
- 4th best economy in the United States** 
- Top 10 best places to live** 
- 2nd highest ranked quality of life in America** 

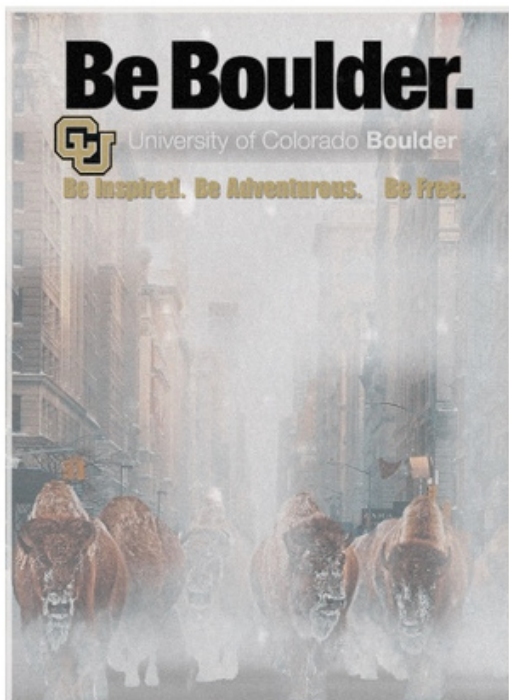
COMMERCIALS ---

Our campaign vision was to strategically utilize CU Boulder's social media platforms to effectively connect with our target audience, leveraging insights gathered from extensive research. This strategy led to the development of two YouTube and TikTok videos designed to align with the principles of the ELM Peripheral Processing and the Symbolic Attitude Approach. These videos are intentionally crafted to be both engaging and visually compelling, showcasing CU Boulder's vibrant quality of life, breathtaking location, and dynamic campus environment. At the same time, they succinctly deliver key information about the university's academic excellence and overall educational value. Additionally, these videos play a crucial role in priming younger generations within our target demographic. By hosting this content on YouTube—identified as the top media platform consumed by our audience—the campaign aims to expose CU Boulder in a positive and aspirational light to students well before they reach their senior year of high school. This early exposure positions CU Boulder as a leading choice, helping to build familiarity, excitement, and anticipation for future college applicants.



POSTERS

CU Boulder's campaign posters effectively utilize the peripheral route of persuasion, as outlined in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), to capture attention and leave a lasting impression. Rather than overwhelming the audience with detailed information, the posters strategically rely on striking visuals, concise and memorable slogans, and emotionally resonant cues. These elements work in unison to position CU Boulder as an attractive and desirable choice for prospective students. By focusing on quick, attention-grabbing features, the campaign fosters positive attitudes and associations without requiring extensive deliberation or analysis, ensuring a broader and more immediate impact on its target audience. Additionally, the posters are designed to initiate priming among younger generations within our target demographic. By distributing these materials across social media platforms most frequently used by this audience, CU Boulder can begin cultivating a positive perception early, encouraging prospective students to view the university as a vibrant, exciting, and aspirational destination for higher education.



CONCLUSION

We wanted to target out-of-state students from urban or big-city environments who seek a high-quality education in a diverse, natural setting while desiring an immersive, socially engaging, and welcoming college experience. We understand that these students may want a new environment different from the urban life that they're used to. As they're accustomed to the city lifestyle, they may want to seek a new way of living that is affordable and isn't fast-paced. By coming to CU Boulder, we hope that they can find our way of living suitable and an adventurous experience. By using priming, a symbolic attitude approach, fear appeal, guilt appeal, elaboration likelihood model, and fear then relief, we hope that the message that CU Boulder is home reaches our target audience. The messages that we have designed, including the advertisement videos, are what aligns with our vision and our goals that reaches our audience the quickest as well as gives us the width of audience. The presentation plays the integral role of providing an in-person experience to these students. By using symbols and presenting the advertisements again, we hope that the students will be able to recall us first in their memories when it comes to choosing which university they want to go to.

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The following references represent the extensive research conducted by our team into all aspects of our target audience and the content presented throughout the entirety of our campaign. Each source contributed valuable insights that informed our strategies, ensuring our campaign was well-grounded in data and tailored to effectively engage our intended audience.

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