CU at the Table

Program Overview

CU at the Table is being piloted as an annual program that invites current CU Denver students to the homes of alumni, faculty, and staff serving as hosts for dinner on three consecutive Thursdays before, after, and during the Thanksgiving holiday. During the two-hour event, students will be treated to a meal and engage in conversation with fellow students and the host on a variety of topics. Discussion topics could be pre-determined by the host, based on questions proposed by the students, or allowed to flow freely.

The pilot student audience for this program would be our international students. Given the significant population of international students currently attending CU Denver, the university seeks to provide an outlet for this group to more deeply connect with the university and the community of which it is a part. Our alumni are increasingly searching for opportunities to meaningfully lend their time and energy to the university as a way to engage with their fellow graduates, current students, and faculty/staff. The CU at the Table program will provide a platform for this kind of alumni engagement, and through such volunteerism, indicate to Advancement staff a new pool of graduates who are willing to take up a deeper role with the institution, as well as give their support in the form of the dinner purchased for the students.

In future iterations of this program, where a wider population of students can be invited, the CU at the Table dinners will be an opportunity for students to meet other current classmates that they previously did not know and potentially make valuable career connections through the host.

The 2017 CU at the Table dinners are projected to take place the evenings of November 16, 23, and 30 with dinner starting after 6:00 p.m.

Common Host Questions and Concerns

- “I don’t like to cook (Or, trust me, you don’t want me to cook!).” Some hosts prepare a delicious meal from scratch while others choose to pick up a prepared meal. Students will be happy and appreciative either way!
- “I’m too busy.” To accommodate busy alumni and faculty/staff schedules, CU Denver Alumni will provide multiple dates for dinner hosting opportunities to choose from.

Hosting Tips

- Dinners usually last two to three hours.
- Hosts will check in guests so that they can provide an attendance list to CU Denver Alumni after the event.
- Hosts will be asked to take some photos of the event for the university to archive and use in future event promotion.
- Given the audience for this event (students), we encourage hosts not to serve alcohol.
Hosts should consider a theme. Having a theme can make for great conversation or put the room at ease. Some ideas include:

- Pizza Party: Order in pizza, set the scene with a red-checkered table cloth and chow down.
- Time-saving Take-Out: Order the best Mexican or Chinese food in town and relax because there won't be any dishes to clean up!
- Movie night: Plan the menu based on the host's favorite movies. Make treacle tarts and cauldron cakes if they're a Harry Potter fan, cheesesburgers for Pulp Fiction or anything shrimp in honor of Forest Gump.
- Breakfast for dinner: Consider a breakfast buffet items that meet the dietary needs of student guests.

Break the ice with a game. Make a room of strangers feel like friends instantly with an ice breaker. Here are a couple of examples:

- Two Truths and One Lie: Each person takes a turn at introducing him/herself and then tells the rest of the guests three “facts” about themselves. Two of them are true and the third is a lie. The guests have to guess which “fact” is a lie.
  
  Example
  
  Hi, my name is Marie and…
  o I’m an architect and I helped design the new CU Denver Wellness Center.
  o I can run a sub 5-minute mile.
  o I've never been to see a play at DCPA.

- I Want to Know: Ask each guest to write down a question that they would like someone else to answer. The questions should be the type that would provide insight about an individual’s personality, tastes, values, etc. The host collects the questions and puts them in a container that is passed around the room. Then, as each guest introduces him/herself, s/he pulls a question out of the container that s/he has to answer.
  
  Example
  o When and why did you decide that you wanted to attend CU?
  o What has been your most memorable CU experience?
  o If you could go back in time and make one decision differently, what would it be?
  o If you could have lunch with anybody, living or dead, real or imaginary, who would it be?
  o If you won the lottery tomorrow, what would you do?

- Celebrity: This game can be played after dinner if time allows. Using scraps of paper, each individual writes down the names of 10 to 15 well-known figures. The assortment of names is put in a container. The group is then divided into two teams. The first team selects one of their members to take a turn. S/he picks a piece of paper out of the container and tries to make his/her teammates guess the identity of the person whose name is on the paper. When his/her teammates have guessed correctly, s/he picks another piece of paper, describes the person, the other teammates make their guesses, and the process continues until a minute has elapsed. At that point, the number of people that have been identified by the team equals the number of points the team earns. The second team then selects a teammate to take his/her turn, until all the players on both teams have had one time “at bat.” The team with the most points at the end is the winner.