

CU Denver Students Participate in European Innovation Academy in Porto, Portugal

During July and August 2025, a group of nine International Business graduate students from the University of Colorado Denver traveled to Porto, Portugal, to participate in the European Innovation Academy (EIA). EIA is a three-week accelerator program that brings together students from across the globe to ideate, design, and pitch new ventures. Offered each summer, this travel study program enables CU Denver students to refine their entrepreneurial skills, gain international experience, and explore cultural perspectives. In addition to the EIA program, the CU Denver cohort also participated in exclusive small-group company meetings designed to connect them with industry leaders in Portugal.

About the European Innovation Academy

The European Innovation Academy is known for its fast-paced, immersive format that challenges participants to step outside their comfort zones. Over the course of just 15 working days, students form teams, identify problems, design and validate solutions, and pitch their ventures to real investors. The program concludes with investors ranking the teams, with the top 10 advancing to a final pitch session. For the CU Denver cohort, the program served not only as an innovative challenge but also as a platform to strengthen their leadership and teamwork skills while collaborating with peers from around the world, including undergraduate and graduate students.

Showcasing CU Denver Innovation

Each CU Denver student joined an international team and contributed unique expertise to develop market-ready solutions. Projects included:

- PortEV: Repurposing second-life EV batteries into affordable energy solutions for homes and businesses.
 - **This team earned the Ed Quinones Outstanding Team Award and secured \$25,000 in funding.**
- SafeMatch: Enhancing trust in the Au Pair industry through AI-driven background checks, emotional screening, and personalized matching.
- HERO: A real-time platform connecting property owners with verified contractors for emergency repairs.
- InfraScan: AI-powered inspections of Germany's aging infrastructure, using photogrammetry and computer vision to detect cracks and create 3D digital twins.
- HealthBook: A universal health record platform designed to make personal healthcare data more transferable and accessible.
- Lumina: A student-focused network providing affordable mental health resources and mentorship opportunities.
- Packasaurus: An AI-powered app that scans rooms to recommend packing strategies and generate inventories for stress-free moves.

CU Denver students stood out for their leadership and collaborative skills, often guiding their teams toward professional, compelling pitches. Their contributions underscored the value of graduate-level perspectives in an international innovation setting.

Beyond the Classroom: Industry Visits

While in Porto, the CU Denver cohort also participated in site visits with local companies that highlighted Portugal's entrepreneurial ecosystem. These visits were organized by CU Denver staff and were a special opportunity only afforded to CU Denver's cohort of students.

- Everythink: An innovation consultancy that introduced students to creative problem-solving and collaborative approaches.
- KPMG Porto: Provided insights into Portugal's economy and the broader European business environment.
- OmniFlow: A smart-cities company transforming urban fixtures into renewable energy-powered hubs, with some innovations already implemented in Denver.

These visits broadened the students' global perspectives on innovation and business, while also providing them with the opportunity to pose insightful questions and draw conclusions that were not necessarily evident to others.

A Transformational Experience

For CU Denver's students, the European Innovation Academy was more than just an academic program - it was an experience of cultural immersion, personal growth, and professional development. Students built lifelong friendships with peers from around the world and showcased growth in their leadership skills.

As one student reflected, "You have to be comfortable with uncomfortable conversations. Just because you may be right doesn't mean you're helping the team. Success at EIA comes from finding the right balance of listening, contributing, and collaborating."

The 2025 cohort's journey in Porto reflects CU Denver's commitment to preparing globally minded business leaders.

This opportunity would not have been possible for CU Denver students without the support of many departments, most notably, CU Denver's Institute for International Business, Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER), Reynolds Program for Global Business, and the Office of Global Education.

Post-Program Debrief

The CU Denver EIA Cohort will be presenting about their teams, projects, and experiences in an International Executive Roundtable event hosted by the Institute for International Business on **Monday, October 13 at 5:00 pm in CU Denver's Business School, room 3007**. Please join us to hear about the 2025 program and consider participating in the 2026 cohort!

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/EIACohort>



