

My **Time** At



UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



4D Experience

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Dear **Graduating** Student,





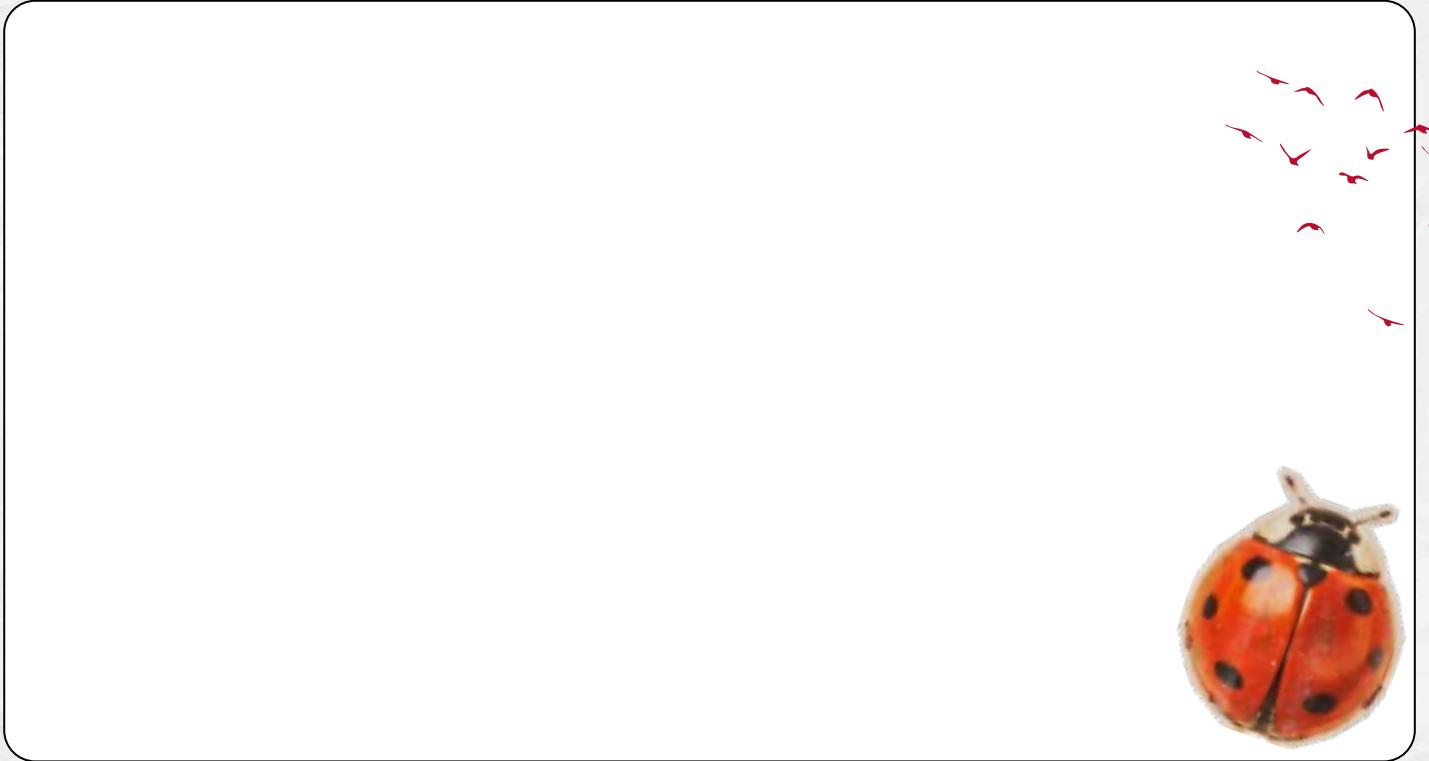
Congratulations on making it to the end! Your community at the University of Denver could not be more proud of you.

As a special parting gift, we have designed this self-guided reflection journal for you to pause and honor the journey that brought you to this moment. Over your years here, you have grown in ways that were unexpected and transformational, stretching your **intellect**, shaping your **character**, navigating your **well-being**, and clarifying your **purpose**.


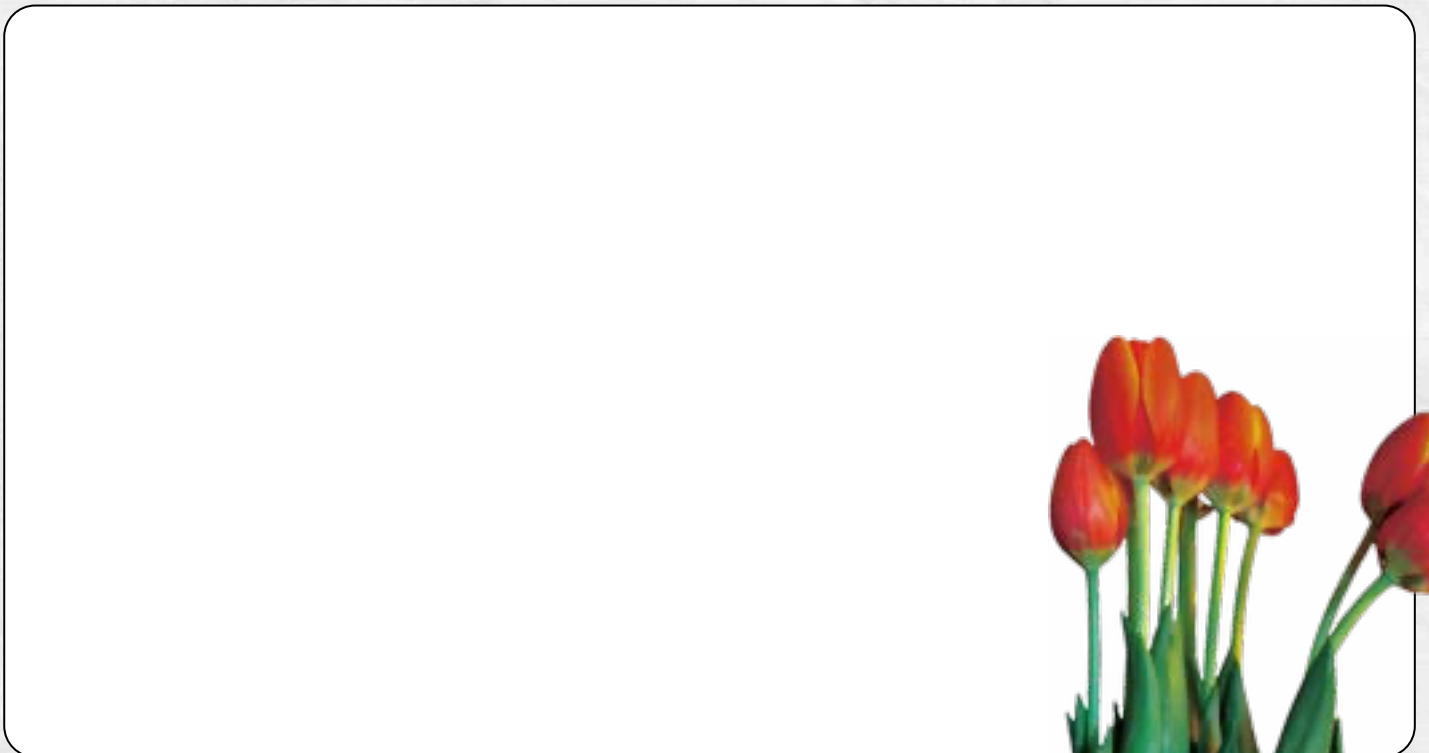
The 4D Experience wasn't just a framework—it was a *living practice* and *ethos* woven into late-night study sessions, moments of courage, friendships that redefined you, challenges that reshaped you, and opportunities that revealed who you are *becoming*. As you turn these pages, may you find space to make meaning of it all, to recognize the strengths you carry forward, and to step *confidently* into life beyond DU with intention, pride, and authenticity.

–Your (forever) **community** at DU

- Who were you when you **first began** your journey at DU? What *qualities and traits, strengths and weakness, relationships and communities* etc. did you hold? What did you think your DU experience was going to be like?



- **Who are you now?** What words would you use to describe yourself to a future employer? What *values, skills, identities, and experiences* have come to define you? How did your DU experience *compare* to your initial hopes?



# Owning Your **Story**

Owning your story is one of the most powerful gifts you take with you as you graduate and step into the wider world. Reflection isn't just a nostalgic exercise—it's an intentional practice that helps you make sense of your experiences, integrate what you've learned, and **articulate** your growth in future opportunities with clarity and confidence.

The 4D lens gives you a meaningful way to organize your inner landscape: your unique, personal and ever-evolving sense of *intellect, character, well-being, and purpose*. These dimensions show up **everywhere** in the real world, including questions you'll be asked by employers, graduate programs, community leaders, and stakeholders in future projects—questions like *“Tell us about a time you grew from a mistake”* (character) or *“Describe a moment when you had to look at a situation from multiple perspectives”* (intellect).

When you recognize what's *actually* being asked, you can respond with intention rather than improvisation. By taking the time now to craft a powerful **personal narrative** around each dimension, you're not just reflecting—you're equipping yourself with evidence and stories that reveal who you are, how far you've come, and where you're trying to go, ready to draw upon in the moment the next opportunity appears.



# My **Intellect** Story - *example*

One of the most powerful experiences that helped me **Deepen Intellect** at DU happened during my sophomore year in a class called *Global Political Ecology*. We were assigned to work in small teams to analyze a real-world environmental conflict and propose a solution that took into account *political, cultural, economic, and ecological* perspectives.

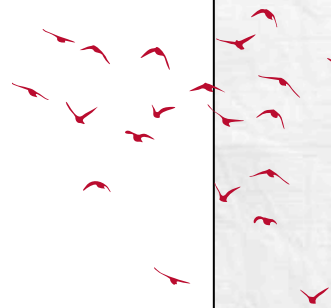
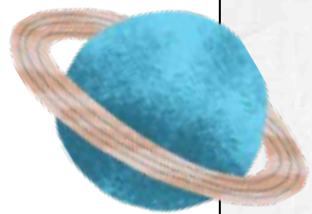
My group chose to study **water rights** in the *San Luis Valley*, so we spent several weekends interviewing local farmers, speaking with community advocates over Zoom, and digging into decades of policy documents. I remember sitting in a crowded café in Alamosa, listening to a farmer explain how water scarcity was reshaping not just his livelihood but his *identity* as a third-generation steward of the land. At the same time, an environmental scientist we interviewed shared data that challenged some of the farmers' assumptions. For the first time, I felt what it meant to hold *multiple truths* at once—to sit inside the tension rather than rush to simplify it.

What made this experience so **meaningful** was how it pushed me far beyond the comfort of theory. Before this project, I thought of myself as someone who needed clear answers and structured steps. But working on this research forced me to question my own assumptions, consider competing perspectives with empathy, and accept that complex problems *rarely* have perfect solutions. I know I'll carry these lessons forward. Whether I'm working on a new team or entering a new community, I strive to keep approaching situations with curiosity, humility, and a *willingness* to explore multiple vantage points.



# My **Intellect** Story

- Think of a powerful experience you had at DU that encouraged you to **Deepen Intellect** (e.g. pursue curiosity, create and innovate, seek new vantage points, engage with complex real-world challenges and questions, and learn to navigate ambiguity).
- Describe what happened—**who, what, where, when, and how**. Be as descriptive as possible. What made this experience so special and meaningful? Who were you before and after this moment? How might you apply what you learned in future situations?



# My **Character** Story - example

One of the most powerful experiences that helped me **Discover Character** at DU happened during my junior year when I served as a dialogue facilitator for *Housing & Residential Education*. Our team was leading a conversation after an **identity-based conflict** had broken out in a residence hall—a heated argument, *initially* between two students, that exposed some deeper cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes within the *larger* group.

I remember sitting in the common room, the lights dim and everyone stiff with tension, as my co-facilitator and I invited residents to share their perspectives and *listen* without interrupting. One student spoke about how isolating it felt to be one of the only students of color on the floor, while another admitted that he hadn't realized how some of his "jokes" were landing. At one point, a usually quiet resident shared that she had grown up being taught not to speak about race at all, and that she was trying to unlearn that silence. It was the first time I saw so clearly how *vulnerability, courage, and discomfort* can create space for transformation and growth.

What made this experience meaningful was how much it **challenged** my assumptions about conflict and leadership. Before this moment, I thought being a "leader" meant having answers and keeping the peace. But that night taught me that *real* character often means stepping into hard conversations, holding space for emotions, and demonstrating your values through *choices*, one courageous moment at a time. I know I'll carry these lessons with me in the future. Whether I'm navigating disagreements with peers or trying to repair harm, I strive to continue practicing empathy, compassion, and perspective-taking.



# My **Character** Story

- Think of a powerful experience you had at DU that encouraged you to **Discover Character** (e.g. cultivate empathy and compassion, challenge and reframe assumptions, engage across difference, develop and commit to values, practice resilience, and lead with authenticity).
- Describe what happened—**who, what, where, when, and how**. Be as descriptive as possible. What made this experience so special and meaningful? Who were you before and after this moment? How might you apply what you learned in future situations?



# My **Well-being** Story - example

One of the most meaningful experiences that helped me **Develop Well-being** at DU happened during the fall of my senior year, when I finally decided to go to the weekly mindfulness group at the *Health & Counseling Center*. I had seen the flyers for years but always told myself I was too busy. That quarter, overwhelmed by a demanding course load and a new leadership role in a student organization, I hit a point where I felt constantly on edge—*sleep-deprived, irritable, and disconnected from myself*.

One Tuesday afternoon, I walked into the small room on the second floor, where a dozen students were sitting quietly on cushions. The facilitator guided us through a simple **breathing exercise**, and for reasons I still can't *fully explain*, I felt something in me soften for the first time in months. I remember noticing how my shoulders stopped tightening, how the silence felt comforting instead of awkward, and how good it felt to breathe without rushing to the next thing.

What made this experience so meaningful was that it interrupted a pattern I didn't realize had become **normal** for me—constantly pushing and grinding, without giving myself grace or space to just be. Before this moment, I measured my self-worth by productivity and saying yes to *everything*. Afterward, I slowly began setting boundaries, taking walks around campus in between classes, and practicing mindful breathing throughout my day. Whether I'm navigating a new job or relationships, I strive to check in with my emotional and physical needs, choose *balance* over burnout, and model for others that well-being isn't a destination—it's a *daily* commitment to caring for myself and others with patience and compassion.



# My **Well-being** Story

- Think of a powerful experience you had at DU that encouraged you to **Develop Well-being** (e.g. embrace healthy behaviors and decisions, give yourself grace, nurture your spirit, cultivate positive relationships, and find balance across foundational, physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational states).
- Describe what happened—**who, what, where, when, and how**. Be as descriptive as possible. What made this experience so special and meaningful? Who were you before and after this moment? How might you apply what you learned in future situations?



# My **Purpose** Story - example

One of the most powerful experiences that helped me **Design Careers and Lives of Purpose** at DU happened during my sophomore year, when I joined a community-engaged learning project through the *Center for Community Engagement to advance Scholarship and Learning (CCESL)*. Our group partnered with a local food bank in West Denver, and my role was to help conduct interviews with residents about access to fresh produce and the impact of rising housing costs on their daily lives.

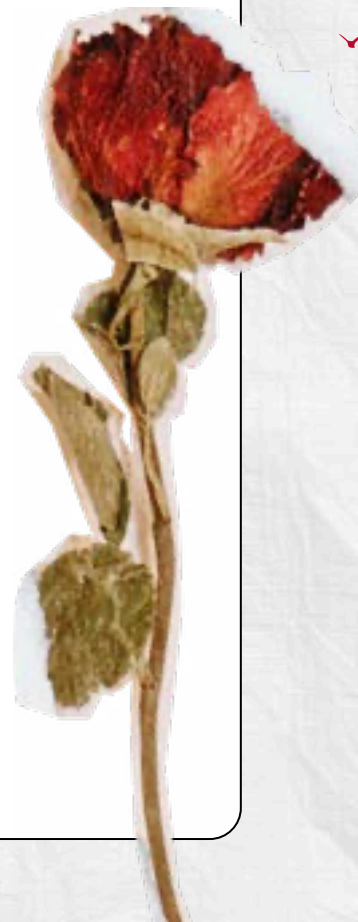
I'll never forget one Saturday morning standing outside a farmers' market, talking with a grandmother who described **food insecurity** and how far she traveled each week just to find affordable groceries. Her story made abstract concepts from class—*inequity, policy, community resilience*—feel painfully and urgently real. As I took notes and listened, I realized clearly for the first time how much I wanted my work, *regardless of field or industry*, to support communities in need.

What made this experience so meaningful was how it pushed me to **connect the dots** across everything I'd been learning—my coursework in public policy, my communication skills from student leadership, and my long-standing curiosity about how systems shape people's lives. Before this project, I thought purpose was about grand ideas like *fate, destiny, and legacy*. But through this work, I began to understand purpose as something you build by paying attention to what moves you and where your strengths can actually *meet* real needs. I know I'll apply these lessons as I explore future roles, whether in public service or another path I haven't discovered yet. I strive to keep approaching opportunities with a *mindset of service*, and contribute to the public good wherever I am in ways that feel authentic and meaningful.



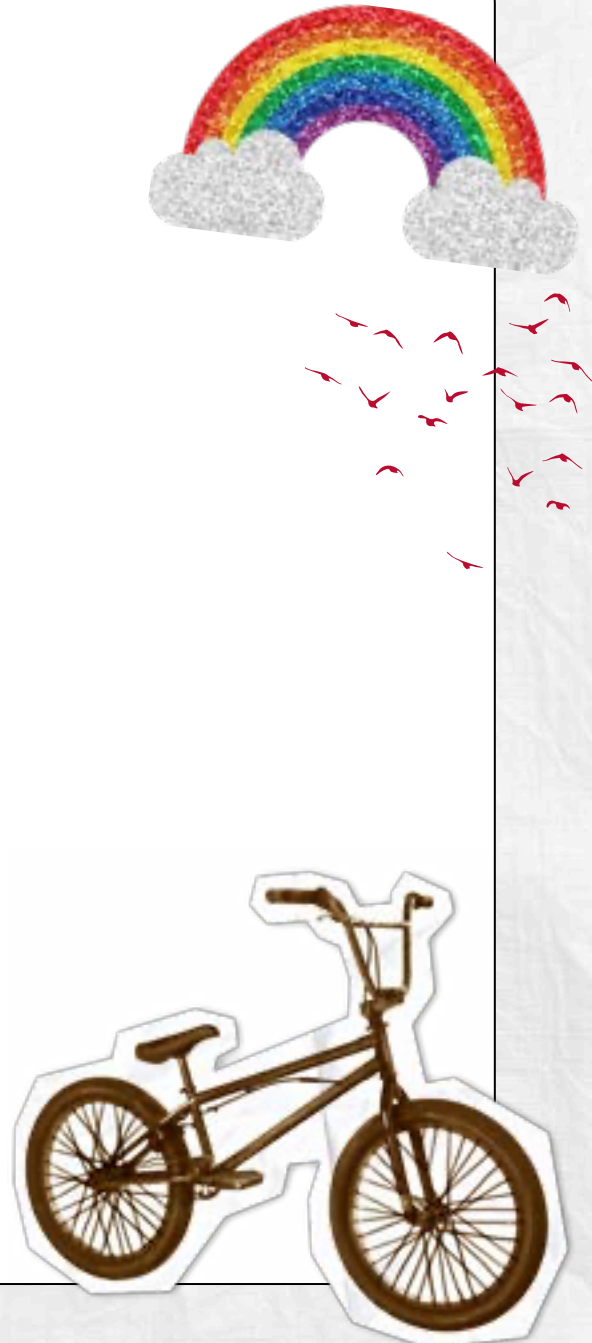
# My **Purpose** Story

- Think of a powerful experience you had at DU that encouraged you to **Design Careers and Lives of Purpose** (e.g. connect the dots across your experiences, set and chart goals, apply skills and talents for the public good, practice civic engagement, and pursue continuous learning).
- Describe what happened—**who, what, where, when, and how**. Be as descriptive as possible. What made this experience so special and meaningful? Who were you before and after this moment? How might you apply what you learned in future situations?



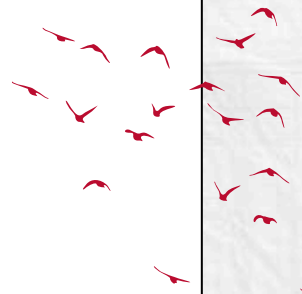
# A Moment of **Gratitude**

- In the space below, write down as many things you can think of that brought you **immense joy** throughout your DU Experience.
- You can include people (e.g. friends, professors, mentors), places (e.g. your favorite coffee shop, lunch spot), professional opportunities (e.g. campus jobs, internships), extra-curricular activities (e.g. students organizations, clubs), classes and research projects, trips (e.g. spring break, study abroad), community service engagements, and fun events you attended (e.g. Winter Carnival, athletic games, cultural events).



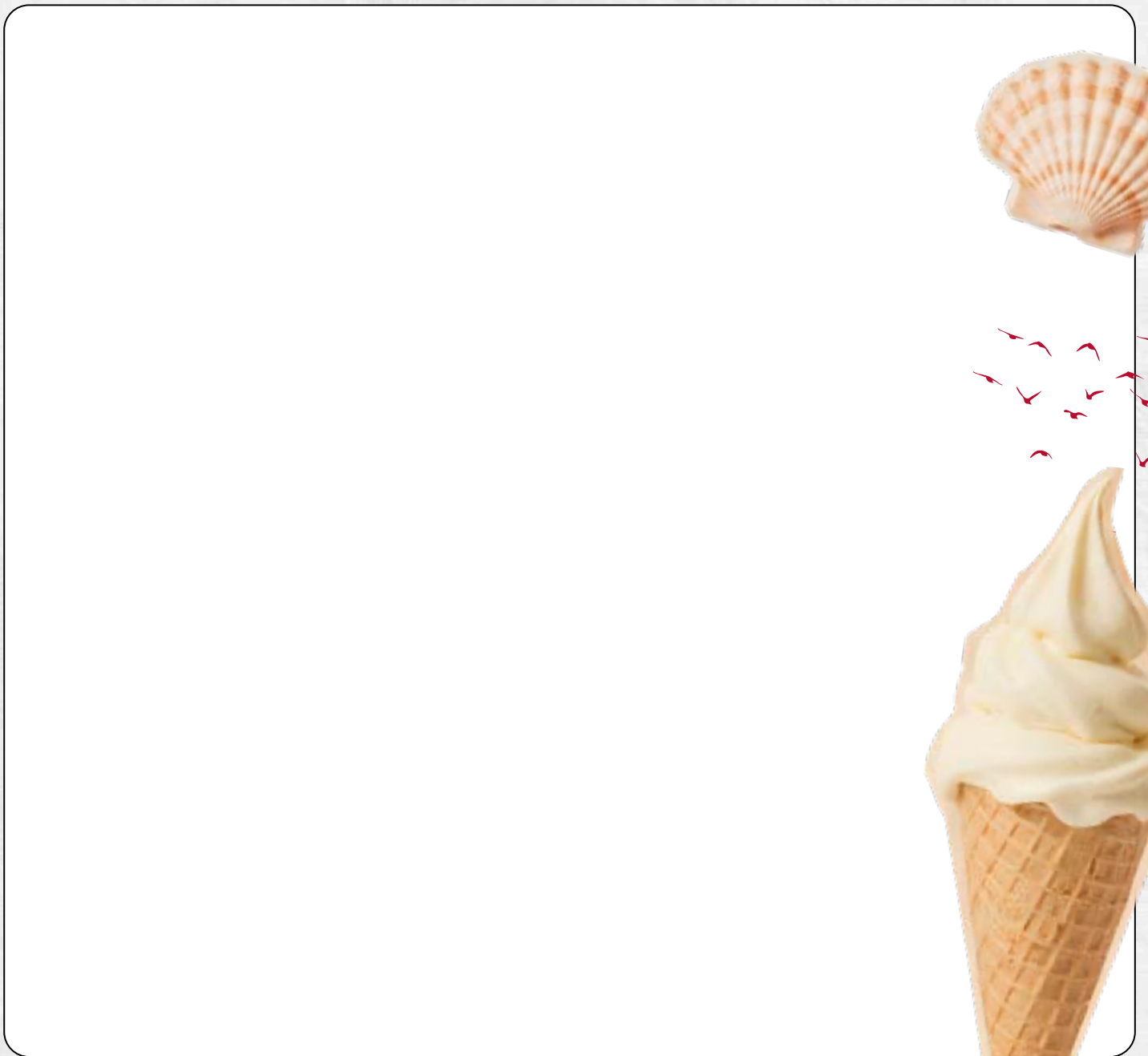
# A Letter from **My Mentor**

- Think of a **mentor you met at DU** (e.g. professor, supervisor, student organization leader) who actively helped shape your personal and professional growth. Ask them to write you a “goodbye-for-now” letter in the space below.
- Your mentor can share: their memory of *first* meeting you, ways they have watched you *transform* over the years, the *qualities* that make you unique and special, the *impact* of your presence in their life, any last words of *wisdom* they want to share as you step into the next chapter, and their hopes and *dreams* for your future.



# A Letter from **My Friend**

- Think of a **friend you met at DU** who changed your life and taught you something special about love, connection, and family. Ask them to write you a “goodbye-for-now” letter in the space below.
- Your friend can share: their memory of *first* meeting you, ways they have watched you *transform* over the years, the *qualities* that make you unique and special, the *impact* of your presence in their life, any last words of *wisdom* they want to share as you step into the next chapter, and their hopes and *dreams* for your future.



# A Letter to **My Future Self**

- Now, **write yourself a letter** that you will read in five years.
- What do you want your future self to know? What might you need reminding of (e.g. *important values and truths that are clear to you right now as you end one chapter, but may become muddied again in the next*). What are your goals, hopes, and dreams for the next five years? How do you want to show up for humanity and serve the public good? And what words of grace and kindness might you share with you future self if these things don't happen perfectly according to plan?



# Graduation Notes



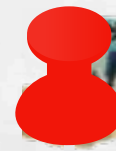
- Ask other friends, peers, professors, and mentors in your chosen family at DU to write you notes of **congratulations** and **advice** here.

# Graduation Notes



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# My College Collage



- Create a collage using artwork, quotes, and photos that represent your **favorite memories** from your time in college. You can print, cut, and paste elements onto these pages, use a poster board, or create an e-collage in *Canva* or *Adobe*.
- Include elements that capture the richness and diversity of your DU experience—the many roles, activities, relationships, and opportunities you pursued, across **time** (e.g. highlights from each year) and **space** (e.g. experiences during Study Abroad, at research conferences, or the Kennedy Mountain Campus). You can refer to your gratitude lists for ideas to visually represent.
- You can also plan a fun collage-making **party** with your graduating friends! You can exchange pictures and tell stories about the great times you had together. You can complete it together digitally for ease, or bring together supplies (e.g. magazines, glue, stickers, markers, photos, boards, and scissors) for tactile engagement.



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# Some **parting** advice...

- **It's completely okay** not to have the next step figured out. Transition seasons are meant to be uncertain. You're not "behind" your peers—comparison is the thief of joy, and your journey/timeline is your own.
- **Give yourself permission** to take time off to breathe, process, and explore. Traveling, living at home for a bit, working odd jobs, or volunteering in the community can offer clarity you simply can't access when you're sprinting from task to task.
- **Trust that your path** will unfold in its own timing. You are allowed to pivot. You are allowed to change your mind. You are allowed to grow into something you couldn't yet name at graduation.
- **Rejection doesn't mean** you're not talented or worthy. Job markets are tough, graduate programs are competitive, and scholarships like *Fulbright* reject amazing people every year. Consider each "no" as redirection toward the right opportunity, rather than a reflection of your self worth.
- **Be open to roles** you never imagined for yourself. Your experiences at DU equipped you with transferable skills (e.g. communication, critical thinking, creativity, leadership) that can shine in surprising places.
- **Try to detach** from your identity as "a college student." You're more than your major, your clubs, your GPA, or the routines that governed your life. Part of this next chapter is discovering who you are *without* the structure of quarters, syllabi, advisors, and supportive campus jobs.
- **Build (or rebuild) a rhythm** that supports your well-being. Without the constraints and demands of college life, you get to design your own balance of rest, movement, creativity, and connection.
- **Let learning remain** a lifelong practice. Reclaim reading just for joy. Take a community class that interests you (e.g. a new language, pottery, coding, dance), anything that sparks curiosity. If you feel like you didn't make the most of your college experience, it is never too late to develop, and you can continue to learn, engage, and grow in the real world. Remember, knowledge doesn't belong to universities—it belongs to communities and you.
- **Seek out mentors**, peers, and communities beyond campus. Staying connected to others will help you navigate uncertainty, open doors to opportunities, and remind you that you're not in this chapter alone.
- **Be intentional** about staying connected to your DU community. Create a simple system e.g. a quarterly reminder to text a mentor, a shared calendar invite for a group catch-up, or a yearly "life update" email. These don't have to be frequent to be meaningful. And don't guilt yourself if life gets busy—small, sincere efforts go a long way!



# Congratulations & **Thank You!**



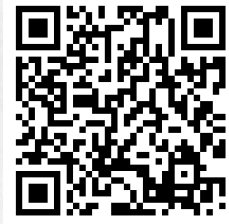
Please take a few minutes to give us some **feedback on your experience** using this zine workbook.

& Visit **4D Education With An Edge** for more workbooks and resources!



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