

# **CU Leeds MBA Class of 2022 Commencement Speech**

**May 5, 2022**

University of Colorado Leeds School of Business MBA Class of 2022 – let’s journey back to your life before you began your MBA pursuit.

When you filled out your MBA application, the word COVID was not in your vocabulary. Did you imagine that masks would be part of your MBA wardrobe as you navigated a global pandemic lockdown?

You studied the Cold War back in high school. Now, as you are receiving your MBA degree, the West is at war with Russia with a fearful scent of nuclear WWIII in the cold damp air of Ukraine.

You came of age with Barack Obama as the only president you knew. He was intelligent, charismatic, and worldly. In your first opportunity to vote, you helped elect Donald Trump.

Okay, perhaps that was unfair. You pondered “what could be worse?” – and then you elected Joe Biden.

Inflation. Stagflation. Did you even utter these words during undergrad? Now – seemingly out of nowhere – we are experiencing the worst inflation since your parents were running around playgrounds.

Today, the date of your graduation ceremony, NASDAQ plunged 6%.

What else happened during your MBA years? Deadly political protests shut down streets in Seattle, Minneapolis and Kenosha. Our nation's Capitol Building was stormed. The polarization of news reached new heights, while the replacement of Supreme Court justices reached new lows. Twitter censored political views, and to the rescue came Elon Musk.

With anger and emotion, we grappled with Black Lives Matter. Defund and refund the Police. Equity versus Equality. Our southern Border. Whether China is a friend or a foe. The fairness of elections and the fracking of oil. Wildfires in our beloved Boulder.

Most shocking of all. Will Smith smacked Chris Rock at the Oscars.

True is this: Acceleration of change is Accelerating!

CU Boulder MBA Class of 2022—you can't possibly mess things up any further. From here, there is only upside. The sun wants to shine again. My bet is on your generation.

Consider this: if so much change happened over your CU Boulder years, what monumental advancements will occur over the next 40 years.

You – the MBA Class of 2022 – is poised to lead the world to a spectacularly better place. You will do this through tech-inspired innovation and community-minded entrepreneurship. You will make food, shelter, and healthcare plentiful to people across our globe.

Your generation will solve climate change. Prosperity will proliferate much of the globe, bringing freedom, liberty and happiness with them.

You will open up brand new worlds with the exploration of space, the deep probing of subatomic matter and the creation of the metaverse. You will commercialize Quantum, transform healthcare, and embed Blockchain into all industries.

Rapidly, Silicon Valley is transitioning from a place in Northern California to a movement that is spreading across the entirety of our planet.

In 2017, only [57 companies became unicorns](#) and a mere 7 were from elsewhere of U.S. and China.

Last year, 1,000 unicorns were born, a 20-fold increase in just four years. A whopping 245 were from countries other than the U.S. or China – a 50X explosion since 2017.

Latin America had Unicorns: Kavak in Mexico. Betterfly in Chile. Brex in Brazil. dLocal in Uruguay and Uala in Argentina.

Southwest Asia launched Airwallex in Australia, Xero in New Zealand, Spiber in Japan, Kurley in South Korea, Nium in Singapore, Bukalapak in Indonesia, and Carsome in Malaysia.

Middle East and Africa joined in on the fun with Go1 in South Africa, Opay in Nigeria, Wave in Senegal, Fawry in Egypt, and Swvl in the UAE.

Europe produced unicorns in 14 countries: U.K., Germany, France, Switzerland, Spain, The Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, and Lithuania.

The entrepreneurs behind these international Unicorns are creating and sustaining jobs in their communities. They are sparking economic activity and spawning other scaleups in their ecosystems. These creative leaders are inspiring entrepreneurs locally and across the globe. Through these innovators, prosperity will reach the furthest corners of our planet.

If International is your jam, the world is your oyster.

If impact closer to home is your fancy, I have great news for you. Innovation is spreading from sea to shining sea, with Colorado being a mountainous example.

In Colorado...

Boom is building the world's first supersonic commercial airplane since the Concorde.

Guild Education is delivering lifelong learning.

Sondermind is redesigning behavioral health to become more accessible while Friday Health Plans makes it easy for individuals to buy their own healthcare insurance.

Outside Inc. created the leading media platform for outdoor aficionados. Outrider is bringing autonomy to logistic yard operations.

Also in Colorado....

Atom Computing – led by CU Boulder scientists – is building quantum computers out of ice cold atoms while Maybell Quantum Industries is manufacturing iceboxes that refrigerate Quantum Computers, allowing them to operate at near absolute zero.

Boulder HQ'd Radia – still in stealth mode – is my favorite. Their cargo planes – optimized for gigantic wind turbines – will enable an insane amount of green energy across our globe.

These are the tips of Colorado's entrepreneurial mountain peaks. Jumpcloud. Dispatch Health. Quantum Metric, and BillGo are all either Unicorns now or will soon be. Many others – including CyberGRX, Workit Health, Spark Gills, Agile Space Industries, and Havenly – are following in their footsteps.

MBA Leeds Class of 2022 – All of this is available to you. Every product and service is being reimagined. Every industry is transforming. This is your canvas to paint your career portrait. Dive in with passion. Full steam ahead.

I'd be remiss if I didn't warn you of danger that lurks ahead. The looming tech advancements will provide the powerful with montronus capabilities. Beware that bad actors will apply tech to evil.

The events of 2022 have reminded us that nuclear, chemical, and cyber warfare, censorship, suppression, destruction and genocide are all real world concerns. Politics has been weaponized. Artificial Intelligence, robotics and gene editing will create new dangers.

The challenge of your time will be to ensure tech is used for good and not allow tech to be **abused** for evil. Don't ignore these threats. Do **more than** your fair share to help humankind navigate these treacherous waters.

Thank you Dean Matusik and the entire faculty and staff at the University of Colorado's Leeds School of Business for providing me the honor to speak to your fine graduates.

MBAs – you are fortunate to have earned your graduate degree at CU Boulder. You've been inspired by the Rocky Mountain foothills, sparked by Boulder's entrepreneurial community, and shaped by classmates, faculty, and staff of this exceptional

institution. Covid has made you resilient. World events have awakened you to the explosive power and dangerous perils of humankind's journey.

Be entrepreneurial, innovative, and passionate. Be fair and open minded, compassionate and generous. Each and every one of you is prepared to play a pivotal role in shaping the world. We need you to lean in, as do the generations that will follow in your footsteps.

University of Colorado Leeds School of Business MBA Class of 2022 – Boulder will always be a home for you. But now, it's your time to pursue your destiny. Go forward, in whatever direction is right for you, and make our world a better place.

---

End