

Dan Phillips

A College of the Redwoods Success Story



Dan Phillips believes that College of the Redwoods played a critical role in his journey from small town kid who struggled in school to working as Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Hulu.

As a child Phillips was challenged with dyslexia, a learning disorder that can make it difficult to read and process written information. Though he was good at math, other subjects proved challenging, and school did not come easy. Fortunately, even though his tiny elementary school offered few opportunities to play team sports (his graduating class had six students), he watched and played enough to know athletics was his passion.

In high school Phillips excelled at football and after learning that wrestling off season would help him stay in condition, he fell in love with that sport too. These activities also helped him discover natural leadership abilities and Phillips captained both his football and wrestling teams.

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Despite his athletic success, Phillips realized he would never play pro-ball. “But it didn’t diminish my enthusiasm,” he explained. “I just really loved sports—the camaraderie, the teamwork. And being able to continue playing became my primary motivator for higher education.”

Phillips enrolled at College of the Redwoods, which would allow him to keep playing the sports he loved, work at a local lumber mill and coach football at his high school alma mater. “Fortunately, there were low barriers to entry, which was important at that time in my life.” If it wasn’t for College of the Redwoods, Phillips added, he may not have attended college at all.

Functioning as captain of the football team his sophomore year also helped him hone his leadership skills as CR became the number one ranked small junior college in the country and was ranked #3 for all junior colleges in the US.

College of the Redwoods also allowed Phillips to explore academic interests and career options—leading to even more success. “Computer science just seemed natural to me and so much easier than other academics,” he said. “There was logic in programming, and I knew it was the field I wanted to pursue.”

Phillips earned an Associate Degree in general education in 1978. He then attended Sacramento State University for a year before family needs brought him back to Humboldt. Back on the Northcoast, CR’s flexibility allowed him to keep attending school in the evenings while he worked during the day. He earned a second AA and certificate in computer science at CR and transferred to Humboldt State University (HSU), now Cal Poly Humboldt. Phillips also resumed coaching locally, though he no longer played. “For me it was always about the love of the game and not the glory of being on the field,” he explained.

Professional Success

After earning Business Administration and Computer Information Systems degrees from HSU, Phillips and a professor founded MetaSystems, an enterprise software company that built software applications for large technology companies such as HP and Sun Microsystems. When their successful endeavor split

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and sold, Phillips moved to the Silicon Valley to work for one of the buyers. That success led to several executive positions with technology companies like Crossworlds, TRADOS, and TiVo before Phillips became Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Hulu, where he was responsible for over 1,000 employees and a budget of almost a billion dollars. Phillips also published several papers with NASA and was granted a patent for his work on expanded object models.

“The material you learn in the classroom is just part of an education and often not even the most important part. The process and struggle of earning a degree, setting big goals, and working hard to achieve them. Even facing setbacks and failures along the way. Responding to those challenges at College of the Redwoods is where I learned some of my most critical and powerful lessons.”

Note

After a brief retirement, Dan Phillips recently took a position as Chief Technology Officer (CTO) with Chamberlain Group, a global leader in smart access solutions across residential and commercial properties.

Phillips also continues giving back to the institutions and community he credits with supporting his professional success. He speaks to local students about value of higher education, has contributed \$1M to a scholarship fund focused on supporting Humboldt County students, serves as the Chair of Cal Poly Humboldt’s Boldly Rising capital campaign and as Co-Chair for the President’s Council at CR.

In 2022, Phillips also launched Lost Coast Ventures (LCV) with fellow Cal Poly Humboldt alumni John Ballard. LCV is a charitable organization providing seed capital, technical support and mentoring for promising business concepts that have the potential to provide jobs on North Coast and be scalable beyond the region.

LCV is an independent organization but has a close partnership with both Cal Poly Humboldt and College of the Redwoods. The LCV board is composed of Alumni, faculty and staff from both institutions and works with faculty, staff, and students to enhance the educational experience while supporting efforts with the potential to transition into successful business enterprises. The ultimate beneficiaries of LCV are Cal Poly Humboldt and College of the Redwoods. The proceeds from an acquisition, merger, or public offering will either be retained within LCV to fund future investments or be returned to the institutions.