

As I take the helm at CU, I will connect with all of Colorado

By Mark Kennedy
Guest Commentary

Like many a newcomer to Colorado, I'm struck by the state's grandeur and vibrancy. Although I've spent a fair amount of time here, my wife Debbie and I are looking forward to discovering more about our new home and exploring all it has to offer.

I'm also excited to learn more about the University of Colorado and I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to lead this great university. Since being named CU president in May, I've been familiarizing myself with the institution by reading various histories and by spending time perusing websites and social media from our four campuses.

Still, there's no substitute for meeting and talking with people who have either deep or passing connections to CU. In the coming months, I look forward to connecting with as many people as possible and hearing their perspective and insights about the institution and its four campuses. A public university such as ours must first and foremost serve the state it calls home, educating its citizens, serving communities and providing research and health care that improves lives and fuels the economy.

I intend to travel the state throughout my tenure to en-

sure that we are meeting that mission and to hear how we can do it better. I will always welcome input about the job we're doing. Listening to people and learning about the university and the state in the coming months will help tremendously.

The good news is that CU is an exceptional institution, one of the leading public universities in the country. It has an impressive history and a solid foundation that is the work of an excellent faculty, dedicated staff, engaged students and accomplished alumni, as well as strong leadership over the past 11 years from President Emeritus Bruce Benson.

While I have much to learn about the university and the state, the Board of Regents and I agree on four fundamental areas of focus that will guide us going forward: elevating student success; keeping a CU education affordable and accessible; growing CU's significant research portfolio and economic impact; and fiscal sustainability. We also agree that developing a strategic plan, with substantial input from inside and outside the university, will provide us a roadmap to ensure we address those four priority areas and others that emerge. We will work toward a shared vision for CU's future.

It's also important for us to do what newcomers to Colo-

rado as well as long-time residents do — connect with our state in meaningful ways. CU is the flagship university system and it's important that our four campuses extend their reach beyond the cities they call home. We intend to ramp up our outreach to every corner of Colorado and ensure we're contributing to communities large and small. We will also ensure we have a laser focus on helping our students succeed.

Whether you're a native Coloradan or transplants like Debbie and me, you recognize that this is a special place. The beauty of the state and diversity of the people who live here are obvious strengths. And so is the role its flagship university system plays. CU has been part of the fabric of Colorado since they both were founded in the same year, 1876. Our fortunes have been intertwined ever since.

I look forward to discovering more about Colorado and CU and to finding ways we can work together to ensure our partnership continues to make our state healthy, strong and competitive.



Mark Kennedy took office July 1 as president of the University of Colorado.