McKinney to lead advocacy efforts for CU system [1]

July 14, 2011

Michele McKinney has been named external affairs and advocacy director for the University of Colorado?s four-campus system, where she?ll lead efforts to educate and engage key constituents.

McKinney will oversee CU?s state and national efforts to build a network to convey the university?s educational, research and economic contributions to Colorado and beyond, as well as to raise awareness about issues affecting higher education.

The program will focus primarily on advocacy activities related to legislative issues, fundraising and reputation. McKinney will work closely with CU?s operations in alumni relations, fundraising, government relations and campus outreach.

?Michele brings considerable experience and knowledge of CU and higher education to this important initiative for our university,? said CU President Bruce D. Benson. ?It is critical for CU to effectively relate its value and its challenges to a variety of people who care about the university so we can enlist their support. Michele is the right person for the job.?

Benson also said advocacy efforts are important to the success of Creating Futures, CU?s $1.5 billion fundraising campaign announced in April.

McKinney has more than a dozen years of experience in Colorado higher education. She previously served as Denver public relations director for Colorado State University and provided communication support to its system office and Board of Governors. She also spent six years as director of communications for the CU president?s office. She earned a bachelor?s degree in business administration from The American University in Washington, D.C.

?CU has great statewide recognition, with die-hard alumni and supporter bases, and has long-established and productive relationships with the business community,? McKinney said. ?I am excited to capitalize on these strengths with a new external affairs and advocacy program that will mobilize CU supporters.?

The new program will form a network of supporters of CU campuses and public higher education. Members will help with public policy and legislative issues and shape public opinion, while broadening support of CU.

?It is imperative for our advocates to help the university spread the word about its many contributions to Colorado, the value a CU degree has brought to their lives, and the dire environment of state funding that faces the university,? McKinney said. ?We need to have a serious conversation with Coloradans about keeping CU affordable so future generations of students can earn the outstanding education this state expects from CU. Our advocacy program will help us have that conversation.?

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