June 2020

Dear Friends,

It’s not enough to merely make it through these strange and uncertain times. We’ve got to meet them head on by leaning into our strengths, resources and potential. By doing so, CU will emerge as an even more vital asset for our students, state and nation.

We’re already well on our way. I’m proud of the proactive approach we’ve taken since the pandemic’s onset to ensure the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff while also delivering on our educational mission. By banding together and pivoting quickly, we led in implementing remote teaching and learning, which enabled our students to continue or complete their academic journeys. Similarly, we were ahead of the curve in implementing remote work for our faculty and staff. The detail and thoughtfulness that went into developing CU Boulder’s plans to reopen campus in the fall – unveiled last week – is commendable. The Denver and Colorado Springs campuses will soon announce their fall reopening plans, and the CU Anschutz Medical Campus has already begun its phased reopening.

Despite grappling with our own challenges, CU’s service to the state – and to its battle against COVID-19 – has never faltered, but rather, has flourished. Through research and innovation, all four of our campuses continue to make meaningful contributions including providing critical guidance to Gov. Jared Polis and his team in developing protocols for Colorado; sprinting to develop a more accurate COVID-19 antibody test; and running 3D printers around the clock to make much-needed personal protective equipment for front line medical professionals.

CU also led the charge in uniting public and private universities statewide to advocate for federal relief funding for higher education against the backdrop of the pandemic. Our collective call resonated and our congressional delegation delivered, both for Colorado and CU: The federal CARES Act will provide roughly $127 million to CU. While we are grateful, stipulations on how federal funding must be used means it does not offset the expected 58% decrease in state funding – a $140 million cut for CU. Additionally, we’re facing considerable uncertainty about our other major revenue streams, including fall enrollment, research funding and auxiliary revenue from campus operations such as housing, dining and parking.

Recognizing the urgent need for fiscal adjustments, we’ve tightened our belts across the university. All four campuses and central administration are sharing in the sacrifice through compensation reductions and other measures. I’m deeply appreciative of the positive attitude, innovation and painstaking efforts to ensure leaner budgets have as minimal impact as possible on our students and our mission.

Despite financial challenges, the COVID-19 crisis has magnified our need to invest in our online presence and technological capacity systemwide. It is imperative that we focus on
these critical areas now, and actually, yesterday. Fortunately, we began a deep dive last fall and have made substantial progress with the Online Learning Project, designed to leverage our online presence, and the Transformation and Innovation Program, which will boost our technology infrastructure. Both endeavors will allow us to be more efficient, effective and innovative. Even pre-pandemic, the evolving expectations and lifestyles of today’s tech-savvy learners demand moving beyond a mindset of online or on-campus to embrace a combination of online and on-campus. All four of our campuses are working together to embrace our approach. I am confident this focus will strengthen our already great university.

Having moved through the triage phase of COVID-19, we clearly see our world has changed. With this new reality comes new responsibilities and opportunities for transformation. We must continue to adapt – our technology, our instruction, our operations, our thinking – as we remain steadfast in our commitment to deliver high-quality education for all students. This is the way forward. This is the way CU will be the institution our students, state and society need now and in the future.

All the best,

Mark Kennedy President

For feedback, contact president.newsletter@cu.edu

To receive President Kennedy’s monthly newsletter via email, contact us at contact@cu.edu.

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