Statements from President Kennedy [1]

Statement from CU President Mark Kennedy, April 1

The environment brought about by COVID-19, with sudden and significant changes to teaching, learning, research, living and work, has challenged us all. It also has led to heightened levels of stress and anxiety, particularly for certain members of the University of Colorado community. Some issues and events have arisen that provide the opportunity to reaffirm CU’s strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. They are not only guiding principles articulated by the university community and its leadership and codified in our policies and practices, but also fundamental to who we are. I wholeheartedly agree with and support our commitment.

In the wake of COVID-19, we have learned of incidents of discrimination and harassment at CU directed toward Asian (particularly Chinese) and Asian American students, faculty and staff. In this challenging time, when we need to do our utmost to support each other, this behavior is the antithesis of who we are. We must reject it outright and confront it when we witness it.

Respect for many people, ideas, cultures and viewpoints is one of our greatest strengths. Part of that is working to be sure all members of the university community feel they are safe, welcome and belong.

One way that manifests itself is support for CU’s DACA students. With COVID-19 hampering administration of renewals, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis this week urged the federal government to automatically extend work authorizations for DACA recipients during the pandemic. It would allow them to continue to work and study in the United States.

Let me affirm anew the university’s statement in 2017 that “DACA students enrich our community, inspire us with their commitment to their education and to their future, and add diversity of perspectives that make our university stronger. We stand firmly behind them and their goal to better themselves and society through education.”

Another part of our community is concerned about a matter in front of the United States Supreme Court. Last October, the Court heard arguments on three consolidated cases that address federal legal protections against discrimination in various settings based on sexual orientation and transgender status. Because the Court’s decision could be released this summer, there is some concern among our community that existing federal protections could be eroded.

It is important to note that the outcome would not impact protections under Colorado’s civil rights laws that expressly prohibit discrimination in employment, housing and access to public accommodations (including education) on the basis of sex, sexual orientation and transgender
status, among other characteristics. Additionally, CU’s policies contain similar protections.

Issues and events remind us of the importance of continually affirming our values. They also offer us the opportunity to firmly reiterate our commitment to a culture of diversity and inclusion. We are a better place because of that commitment, which I fully support.

**An update from President Mark Kennedy on COVID-19, March 23**

CU joined with Colorado’s public and private colleges and universities in engaging our Congressional delegation to request emergency aid for our students and institutions. I appreciate the conversations with our representatives in the House and Senate, who are crafting a stimulus and relief package to respond to COVID-19. [View the letter here.][2]

**CU, yesterday and today, March 18**

Dear Members of the CU Community,

As our community faces the substantial disruption brought about by COVID-19, we are well-served by our proud history of rising to challenges.

In the early 1920s, when Ku Klux Klan factions in the Colorado legislature threatened to cut off state funding unless CU President George Norlin purged the faculty of Jews and Catholics, Norlin stood firm and the university made its way without the funds but with its values intact.

Throughout our 144-year history, we’ve had floods and fires, disasters and mayhem, yet we always came together as a community to address challenges head-on. Today we face COVID-19 the same way. Our imperatives have been to protect the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff, continue to deliver on our educational, research and service missions, and prepare for what’s next.

I’m proud and appreciative of the work of faculty and staff across CU’s four campuses. With their help, we have quickly supported social distancing by transitioning classes from in-person to remote, limiting gatherings and suspending university travel, among other measures. I’m also proud of the ability of our students to adapt to unexpected detours on their educational journeys. We are by no means perfect, but we have done a lot right and have made doing the right thing our guiding principle. It will remain so as we confront what’s ahead.

The crisis will enter new phases in the coming weeks and months, and our goal must be to continue the can-do spirit we’ve demonstrated throughout our history. We must ensure the quality that is the hallmark of a CU education. We recognize that moving to remote teaching and learning on our campuses, particularly when the transition happens quickly, is not optimal. Teaching remotely is not the same as online teaching, where courses are designed from the outset for that delivery method. I am confident in our faculty’s ability in the weeks and months ahead to deliver on the promise of a quality education, no matter the delivery method. After we return to our traditional high-quality, on-campus and online educational experiences, we will apply what we learn now as we bridge to the future.

We very much appreciate the support of all of you inside and outside the university during this
challenging time. When a crisis hits, a community must come together and its members must support one another. I trust you are doing that with you and yours. I am optimistic that as we draw on CU’s spirit of community, working together we will successfully navigate the uncertain months ahead.

For feedback contact: officeofthepresident@cu.edu [3]

All the best,

President

Stay up-to-date by following these pages:

- CU Boulder [4]
- CU Colorado Springs [5]
- CU Denver [6]
- CU Anschutz Medical Campus [7]
- CU system [8]

CU on the Air: Updates on what we are doing at CU, March 13

CU on the Air podcast: Updates on the coronavirus and what we are doing at CU [9]

(Friday, March 13, 2020) -- I talk about what CU is doing to ensure the health and safety of its students, faculty and staff as well as emergency plans in place and long-term impact on the university.

Statement from President Kennedy, Chair Gallegos March 11

Ensuring the health and safety of our community, March 6

Coronavirus: The steps we are taking to ensure the health and safety of our CU community (Friday, March 6, 2020) -- The health and safety of the University of Colorado community is our highest priority as we coordinate our response to addressing coronavirus (COVID-19). It is receiving the highest level of attention on our campuses and system administration. I am having regular, ongoing conversations with the four campus chancellors and engaging experts inside and outside the university. We are regularly communicating with the CU Board of Regents. It would be irresponsible if we did not prepare for the likely event of cases of the virus on our campuses. We have contingency plans for our fundamental activities in teaching and research, and we continue to refine those and additional operational contingencies. We are keeping students, faculty and staff apprised with updates. While we are addressing the
issue at hand, we are also taking the long view and planning for dealing with it in the weeks and months ahead. We are prepared for a fast-moving and ever-evolving situation.

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