



University of Colorado  
Denver

October 24, 2023

Dear Faculty Assembly Leadership:

I want to acknowledge your letter dated October 17, 2023, which I take very seriously and to heart. I also want to thank you for the opportunity to respond to your concerns and begin to work toward a constructive plan of action that creates success for the university, our students, our faculty and staff, and all of us as leaders. On a positive note, I actually feel that we are well aligned in that we believe in the importance of shared governance and in the criticality of building and maintaining mutual trust, respect, and open dialogue.

In this letter, my desire is to provide a high-level overview of where we've been, where we are going, and how we might move forward together. In the interest of true engagement and shared understanding, I prefer not to engage in a written point-counterpoint communique. Rather, I want us to work together to resolve our differences, find common ground, enrich our relations, and improve in areas that require it. Following, I provide a few thoughts on some of the themes that you raised.

- **The Importance of Shared Governance:**

Since I arrived at CU Denver in July 2021, I have expressed privately and publicly my desire to engage productively with shared governance leaders and that continues to be the case. While that is always my intention, it seems that I need to continue to strengthen how I put this philosophy into practice, which I'm committed to doing.

I am also confident that, despite some transitions in shared governance leadership and some transitions in the Provost's Office, which can sometimes delay forward momentum, we have made tremendous progress in deepening our relationships with all shared governance leaders over the last two years and continue to identify ways for greater collaboration. Among our accomplishments together are the development and implementation of the RACI model for our budget deliberations last year, the recent formation of our academic working groups for our transformation initiative, and the collaborative nature of the IRC Roadmap development and rollout, which continues. As I wrote to the campus community last fall about the roadmap: "I also want to reiterate that, as we navigate through the roadmap over the next three years, we will do so with transparency and accountability, and with shared governance guiding our work at every stage."

Confidence in our shared governance relations is not only essential to me personally but it was also affirmed by the Faculty Assembly leadership at the Feb. 9-10, 2023 Board of Regents meeting, where public acknowledgement was made that the state of shared governance had never been better and that we had put into place accountability measures that helped to ensure the strength of shared governance for the benefit of the university—and, importantly, our students.

This sentiment is a wonderful place from which to continue and reset, in the interest of the CU Denver community. I am proud of our responsiveness when it comes to our work with the Faculty Assembly. For example, in Fall 2022, we immediately ceased the collection of DEI-related activities in Faculty Activity Reporting when the Faculty Assembly brought to our attention that inclusion of that item was done without faculty consultation and approval. In Spring 2023, we addressed the Faculty Assembly's Committee on the Status of Women's request to include a Pandemic Impact Statement in faculty review processes, which is implemented in this review cycle. In Summer 2023, we also reached an agreement to incorporate Faculty Assembly-prepared information into Canvas Shells to provide details about Faculty Course Questionnaire (FCQ)-related practices involving the Office of Equity, which will be implemented in Fall 2023 FCQ cycle. Furthermore, we committed to supporting Faculty Assembly's efforts to enhance teaching assessment tools. These instances illustrate our responsiveness to Faculty Assembly and underscore our robust shared governance structure. I am a firm believer that strong shared governance makes strong universities. And, of course, I recognize that we have a lot of work to do, together, including on complex issues such as strengthening shared governance at our schools, colleges, and the library.

- **Management of Specific Academic and Student Affairs Operations:**

I wholeheartedly agree that we continually need to assess and enhance the strategy and operations of our Financial Aid Office and our student mental health offerings and support, which are critical priorities at all levels of the institution. More importantly, every aspect of the student experience must be continually assessed and enhanced. That is precisely why Dr. Monique L. Snowden, as a new leader in this area who recognized some historic and long-standing gaps in these spaces, commissioned studies about our current operations to better understand where we were and how we can improve. She and other leaders are currently developing action plans to correct any lingering gaps, but many have already been addressed. In the case of the Counseling Center, I can assure you that Dr. Snowden and Dean Lynn are completely aligned in terms of mission, approach, and service delivery, although more work needs to be done because of the complicated structure and resourcing of the center.

In terms of financial aid, we have already begun to make several critical improvements, including the hiring of new leadership to oversee and direct the areas of enrollment management and financial aid. The new leadership team is working closely with Human Resources to fill vacancies more efficiently and better ensure that new staff are effectively onboarded and well-trained. In addition, we continue to refine financial aid and scholarship

awarding strategies to support our students and achieve university recruitment, retention, and program completion goals. Relatedly, we are strongly focused on aligning our enrollment strategies with necessary operational excellence. We can always do better and will always strive to do better. I want to express my strong support for Dr. Snowden and the direction she has set for the Division of Strategic Enrollment and Student Success. I also want to acknowledge the dedication, leadership, and hard work of each member of my leadership team.

With respect to graduate education, I understand that the dissolution of the graduate school, while the right strategic move for CU Denver, occurred quickly and without a more robust consultative or transition plan B. Staffing shortages resulting from resignations immediately following the dissolution made the transition harder. I own that, and I continue to work with my leadership team and the deans to solidify and enhance graduate education and graduate offerings across the university. We are not there yet, but please know that the commitment is there and, with the addition of new leadership dedicated to graduate education operations, we are on our way to stabilize and excel in this area.

- **CAP Leadership Transition:**

I recognize that difficult decisions involving leadership changes and personnel matters often create strong and divided feelings in a community. I admit in hindsight that my communication of former dean Nan Ellin's departure could have been handled differently. I own that mistake, which made a painful issue for all of us even more so. Despite some of the process issues surrounding the announcement, which I have since reflected on and learned from, I stand by my decision. This decision was not made lightly or without significant due diligence, thought, and consultation. I ask that we collectively move forward in support of the College, its interim dean Stephanie Santorico, and the tremendous value it and its faculty and staff provide to our students, city, and state. I want to acknowledge and thank Stephanie for the able leadership she is providing the College under extremely difficult circumstances.

- **Addressing IRC Faculty's Long-Standing Concerns:**

Since my earliest days at CU Denver, I have pledged my and CU Denver's commitment to addressing the long-standing concerns of our Instructional, Research, and Clinical faculty, having stated publicly that: "Addressing the IRC faculty concerns is our moral and institutional responsibility as a community." I stand by that statement and remain poised to act. We released our initial IRC Roadmap last fall, and we have continued to collaborate with Faculty Assembly, UCDAI, and academic units on several issues, including compensation and multi-year contracts. We are actively developing solutions related to compensation equity and many other issues, and that work continues, together. In this process, we learned that addressing some long-standing problems requires additional diligence, consensus building, and engagement in rigorous data collection—all of which take more time and sometimes result in delays. But let me end by emphasizing that I am confident that our partnership with UCDAI and our IRC faculty will have a transformative effect on faculty

experience and our institutional culture at CU Denver, and its impact will reach to other CU campuses.

### **How We Work Together and Move Forward**

From your letter, I gleaned a desire for more communication, more transparency, more collaboration, more accountability, and more standardized operating procedures for how we interact, and measure and report on our progress. I absolutely agree and look forward to sitting down and working with you to co-create a blueprint for our future. I appreciate and thank you for your intent to guide, which the communication to me conveys, and for your openness and desire to work with this administration as we head into another challenging year.

My very best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Nakuma", followed by a small exclamation mark.

Constancio Nakuma, PhD

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs