

AAUP Proposal

It has been the role of the AAUP for many years and at many institutions to provide alternative viewpoints which bring to center stage the fundamental missions of education, scholarship, and community service in our universities, particularly when it seems that some actors in positions of power are not doing so. This document represents an effort by the AAUP chapter of CSU-P to provide some of that approach, and in so doing, to make some specific proposals to handle the current "crisis."

Several things are clear: First, the true extent of the crisis is not known. The crisis mentality erupted after a multi-million dollar accounting error made in the CSU-P budgeting office. Charging for COF (the "Colorado Opportunity Fund") has been found to be incorrect, after a couple of years of trying to correct ongoing errors, as recently as a few weeks ago. Upper administrators frankly admit that our campus "Fact Book" is so filled with errors that **every single page has one or more**. Senior faculty who have looked at some budget spreadsheets are completely mystified about what certain lines represent -- and these lines represent non-trivial adjustments to what our actual financial situation is.

Second, the vision Chancellor Martin expressed in his meeting with the campus community on January 6th is completely at odds with CSU-Pueblo's mission in our community, in southern Colorado, as an HSI and an institution which serves many current and former military service members and their families, indeed as a public, four-year, regional comprehensive university. That the System should be considering expanding into South Metro Denver while its core mission is at risk in Pueblo (we are told), is a sign that the System has abandoned that core mission. CSU Metro Denver is not an opportunity for CSU-Pueblo to expand, and "going to where the customers are" does not protect our mission and the vital roles CSU-P plays; it places profits over the diverse group of people in southern Colorado we should continue to serve.

Third, an item of institutional memory which has now been forgotten: the University of Southern Colorado joined the CSU System in order to gain benefits of working with CSU-FC -- and to bring benefits to Ft Collins (as we regularly do, particularly by our HSI status and great diversity) -- but not to lose authority and control to an organization in Denver which does not care about Pueblo. This was made very clear in the proposals which were presented to, and voted on by, the USC faculty. It is possible that today's "crisis" is the first example where Pueblo's interests are so abandoned by the System that a conflict appears, but we should remember that we did not originally offer ourselves to be sold down the river.

Fourth, for more institutional memory: CSU Global was created to tap into an educational market which could provide operating funds for the rest of the System. Global may have paid back its up-front financial debts, but many of the courses there are based on intellectual property from the other campuses which was freely given with the clear understanding that everyone had at the time: Global's profits would be used for the other campus's operating expenses. (If not, what is Global **for**? Do we simply want to compete with the University of Phoenix and other for-profit colleges and universities?)

Fifth, it is clear that there has been a huge failure of shared governance on this campus, and that all "middle management" (deans and the provost) has abrogated its responsibility to advocate for our

students and our faculty, and even its responsibility to communicate. To her great credit, President Di Mare seems to be open to hearing faculty voices and has pushed deadlines and accepted input from Faculty Senate and the AAUP; those under her have given no public indication of any inclination to speak on behalf of the faculty and students.

What to do now?

1) It is obvious that a complete restructuring and management/personnel overhaul is necessary in the budgeting and financial offices at CSU-P (and, to be honest, in other offices which are in turn their supervisors throughout the Administration building on our campus and even in the System office – which surely bears some responsibility). The AAUP recommends that an external forensic auditor be brought in to make a careful and complete analysis of our current fiscal situation and what can reasonably be extrapolated for the future. Without this information, it is impossible to plan wisely.

2) The AAUP recommends against firing any teaching faculty whatsoever, and cautions against other movements against faculty which would have consequences for the quality of education we can offer at CSU-P.

First, it is the opinion of the AAUP that it would be a violation of the Handbook to let go of tenure-track faculty, even in the first years of their probationary period, for financial reasons unless financial exigency is declared.

Therefore the only teaching faculty who could be let go would be lecturers and adjuncts. At the salaries we pay such employees, it would have to be a tidal wave of such firings to approach the arbitrary target we have been set.

This cannot help but have an enormous impact on our students and our programs, not to mention its impact on our community and the cruelty it represents to academics to learn at this time of the year of the ending of their positions.

Second, a thoughtlessly applied universal policy of "12 credits for all faculty" would destroy faculty members' chances to continue their research and service -- which is what distinguishes us from a community college, particularly in an era in which the community colleges are asking to be able to offer four-year degrees. Also crucial to our faculty members' research efforts are sabbaticals, which, for the upcoming year, have yet to be approved by the Board of Governors; we want all CSU-Pueblo sabbaticals that have been approved at the college level to be approved by the BOG.

Third and last, offering early retirements seems to be of questionable financial gain in the short run, since the System may be helping less in this effort than we had first heard. If, however, non-coercive offers are made and senior faculty members want to take them, the AAUP has no objection so long as their teaching duties are replaced by sufficiently many and sufficiently qualified new faculty.

3) If our campus administration wants to propose other cuts in staffing instead of faculty, the AAUP

has, with great caution, no objection. One area which would be quick and easy would be athletics: it is clear that completely removing athletic programs would be very unpopular, so probably cannot be done, but certainly they can be put on a strict diet. And certainly also they are not part of the core mission of a university.

Outside athletics and faculty, there are the many classified staff and admin pros in offices and departments around campus. A great many of these provide essential services to our students – including things like maintenance and clerical services which may not all require direct interaction with students but are essential for the safe and productive environments in which students learn and faculty teach – and absolutely cannot be let go.

The quickest way to get a large savings would be to let go of some highly placed and ranked (and paid) administrators. The provost has completely failed his role to defend academics and the faculty. Further, his list of innovations some weeks ago which were all recalled with enormous embarrassment speak to a great lack of wisdom and understanding of this institution. Finally, his absence during much of the last few weeks of "crisis" show that his presence does very little on this campus. If campus administration wants to replace the provost and his office with a much more modest office and dean of the faculty, that would probably save money and only improve the functioning of the university. And certainly, the assistant provost is a position which seems to contribute very little to education at CSU-P in proportion to its expense.

The deans have also failed quite seriously in their duties, as was mentioned above. It would also probably save money and improve our university to remove all dean positions (and certainly the associate deans) and replace them with either more modest "directorships" or perhaps with two deans: a dean of arts and sciences and a dean of professional studies.

If cuts on campus are to be made, they must be made strategically; however, given the compressed timeline we're working with now, the CSU-Pueblo AAUP chapter has serious concerns that any cuts made in reaction to the chancellor's directive are going to be far from strategic and may have negative consequences that we cannot fully anticipate at this moment.