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Sent Monday, December 15, 2008 9:47 am
To openforum@denverpost.com
Cc "[Mumme, Stephen](mailto:Stephen.Mumme@ColoState.EDU)" <Stephen.Mumme@ColoState.EDU> , [Dean Saitta](mailto:Dean.Saitta@du.edu) <dsaitta@du.edu> , "[Rees, Jonathan H](mailto:jonathan.rees@colostate-pueblo.edu)" <jonathan.rees@colostate-pueblo.edu>
Re Guest commentary on selection process for CSU pres/chancellor

Dear Dan and Post Editorial Board:

[Below] is a commentary from the leaders of the Colorado Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) regarding the selection process for state university presidents and chancellors, with special emphasis on Colorado State University.

As you know, AAUP is the primary professional organization for higher education faculty in the United States. (Dan, I spoke with you about the tenure process for a column you wrote in the aftermath of the Churchill situation.) Our commentary lays out the principles by which leaders of institutions of higher education should be selected.

We hope this commentary will be published in the print copy of the Post in order to ensure the widest possible readership. Thank you for your consideration.

- Laura Connolly, Ph.D., Co-President, AAUP-Colorado (laura.connolly@unco.edu; 970-351-1558)
- Dean Saitta, Ph.D., Co-President, AAUP-Colorado (dsaitta@du.edu; 303-871-2680)
- Stephen Mumme, Ph.D., President, AAUP Chapter, CSU-Fort Collins (Stephen.mumme@colostate.edu; 970-491-7428)
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The Next President and Chancellor at Colorado State University

The prospect of a new president and, most likely, a new system chancellor for Colorado State University has generated considerable buzz statewide, and for good reason. Few decisions are as vital for the state's opportunity and progress as the leadership of its historic land grant university.

Faculty at Colorado's public universities are pleased CSU's Board of Governors is proceeding deliberately, transparently, and inclusively in considering whether to separate the chancellorship from the presidency. These same principles should prevail as they weigh the resumes of an ample pool of applicants for these posts. As they begin vetting files they should

also be guided by nearly a century of the accumulated wisdom of the American Association of University Professors.

An understanding of the unique character of America's colleges and universities lies at the core of the AAUP's precepts for executive selection. Universities, especially land grant universities, are tasked foremost with advancing the public good through teaching, scholarship, and outreach. As such, they are only as strong as their faculty. The faculty, in turn, thrives in a climate of academic freedom that nurtures critical inquiry and debate—the crucible of innovation. Students and society benefit.

What the AAUP and faculty know all too well is that universities are not classic corporations. Corporations thrive as limited purpose organizations with profit as a ready metric of success. Even in their more diversified and flattened form—the HP way—they normally operate as hierarchies, pyramids dominated by executives in turn responsible to boards.

Universities don't work this way. Their pyramids, if pyramids they are, are very nearly inverted. Executives serve to support the organization. In the strictest sense they do not lead, not in the sense of the sergeant at the head of a platoon. They represent the university, yes. They monitor its progress and influence its directions. They convey the accomplishments of their faculty and students to the public. But sergeants they are not. In all the university's most critical responsibilities—curriculum, pedagogy, scholarship, even outreach and service—the expertise of the faculty is paramount. To have it otherwise impairs the university's credibility and prestige.

And that is where the AAUP's cardinal precept for higher education administration, the principle of shared governance, enters in. As the vital core of the university, faculty are not only responsible for matters of curriculum and scholarship but are expected to actively contribute to the crafting and application of university rules, procedures and programs, sharing responsibility with the administration. The chief executive, in turn, must be qualified “to serve both as the executive officer of the governing board and as the chief academic officer of the institution and the faculty.” The system works best when the executive commands the respect of the faculty and facilitates its campus role.

This does not mean a skilled executive experienced in politics or the private sector or both need not apply for the post. As Denver University chancellor, Dan Ritchie drew on his deep links with the private sector to revitalize university finances while simultaneously inspiring and renewing faculty support for the educational enterprise. His success, however, owed as much to his energetic engagement with faculty and passionate faith in their work as to his financial acumen. His knowledge of the institution and his willingness to better understand faculty work was considerable the day he assumed the Chancellorship.

Unfortunately, the appointment of higher education leaders at Colorado's public universities has all too frequently strayed from the ideal of shared governance. This split between faculty and administrators has not served the state well, producing leaders too often at odds with core faculty concerns. Such neglect has distanced Old Main from students, faculty, and staff and diminished faculty confidence in the ability and willingness of their university

leaders to articulate and advance the core values that make American universities the envy of the world.

As CSU's Board ponders a new campus president and system chancellor to lead the university into the second decade of the 21st century we hope they reflect on these core values that serve America's colleges and universities so well. They should examine executive credentials at CSU's twelve peer land grant universities, esteemed institutions including the University of California's Davis campus, Michigan State University, and Ohio State. They should aim high on both administration and scholarship. The next president, and the next chancellor, if that should come to pass, should each meet these high standards. They are, after all, agents and symbols of academic excellence and the state's academic ambassadors to the world. Their achievement should command the support of the faculty and their students. They should be ready to reach out to faculty and all the university's constituencies. That's the AAUP's way, and where university leadership is concerned, it's the best way still.