John Evans Study Committee
Notes from 4/4/13 Meeting with Chancellor and Provost (by D. Saitta)

Saitta briefly summarized how we got to this point and this meeting.

The Chancellor recounted his conversations with President Shapiro at NU, the Methodist Church Bishop, the Tribes, and the Colorado Governor. The Chancellor emphasized several times the need to "acknowledge this history" in a thoughtful and informed way. He advocates an "institutional approach" at the "highest levels." Lots of stuff could happen as the result of such an approach, like educational events. We must think about what outcomes we want to happen. The Chancellor wants "constructive healing" to take place. We should "steer a course that leads to something meaningful", something "positive", something "truly constructive." A "unified approach" that links multiple institutions (universities, Church, State Government) will have more power and pack more punch; it will prevent this from becoming a "crazy academic exercise" and perhaps keep things from getting politicized.

Colorado's Lt Governor emphasizes that this process must be "owned" by the Sand Creek descendant community and other Native American groups. The Tribes must be "thoroughly engaged." Other concerns were expressed about how this process could get "hijacked" and be driven in a lot of different ways. We must involve people in a "bipartisan" way.

Students must be engaged. We must produce something that students can understand. They do not know this history. What do we want the experience for students to be like? How do we "pique their consciousness and sustain it?" The Chancellor mentioned a couple of times that "our future is diverse" and we need to "embrace" that diversity. Cultural changes are coming. The "Denver Boone" mascot controversy tells us where we are as a campus community and how far we have to go. We should use this as an opportunity to make some progress in the right direction.

The Chancellor was pleased to get our committee's message that something was happening at DU to push this forward. He questions, however, the need for multiple groups/committees to be working on this. Tink responded that multiple groups is not a bad idea. We'll be doing our own research on particular issues (like, John Evans's activities as a railroad baron and what that meant for the appropriation of native lands).

The Provost noted the abundance of professional historians on NU's committee, all appointed by the NU Provost. He implicitly questioned whether the DU committee is up to the "deep archival work" that would be required. There was some pushback on that. Plus, if we supplement a research focus on Evans with, as Nancy suggested, a focus on reconciliation and healing then we clearly have expertise and resources on campus (at both DU and Iliff) that would allow our committee to be successful.

The Chancellor asked that we keep him posted on our work [which I take to imply that we have his approval to proceed]. The Provost asked that we meet again.