

Dear Board of Governors,

For more than a century, the Faculty Council of Colorado State University has been a steadfast defender of shared governance as a cornerstone of effective and ethical institutional leadership. Broad, informed, and participatory decision-making processes are fundamental democratic values reflected in the established governance structures at CSU and at other higher education institutions across the nation. Further, principles such as the separation of powers, transparency in decision-making, respect for established procedures, and accountability are central to the land-grant mission at institutions like CSU and form the foundation of our shared governance system.

Over the past decade, our institution has been in turmoil. We have experienced repeated leadership transitions that have significantly eroded morale among faculty, administrative staff, students, and alumni. President Frank (2008–2018) presided over a period of financial expansion and relative stability, leading to the abbreviated tenures of President McConnell (2019–2022), Interim-President Miranda (2022), and now to the current presidency of President Parsons (2023–present). The changes in chief executive leadership have corresponded with multiple changes at the provost level as well (Miranda, Pedersen, Nerger, Underwood, Youngblade). These rapid shifts in leadership have coincided with financial contraction and have created instability and uncertainty across the institution. Today, CSU is facing its most severe financial challenge since the Great Recession, leaving units to wrestle with planning for 8-10% budget reductions. While these hardships are shaped in part by broader federal and state-level conditions, they are also the direct result of financial decisions made by University and System-level leadership, with limited engagement from faculty and staff.

Amid these financial challenges, we are now facing another transition in leadership as the CSU community was recently informed of the initiation of a search for a new Chancellor. We, the faculty, have significant concerns about the nature of the search process. Specifically, we are concerned that:

- The search for our next Chancellor is limited to applicants currently affiliated with the CSU System. An internal search, for a position of this magnitude, is not only misaligned with institutional peers, and limits our ability to identify the best candidate. Furthermore, it fosters an impression that the slate of potential candidates is already determined.
- We have extreme concerns that the Search Advisory Committee is composed only of the voting members of the Board of Governors, or the Evaluation Committee. Again, this process is misaligned with institutional peers and neglects the essential input from the larger campus and system community. This reinforces the impression that the outcome is pre-determined.
- To our knowledge, the search advisory committee has not consulted with students, faculty, staff, or administrators about what attributes they need in the next chancellor. The search advisory committee did not include any of the faculty or student representatives to the Board from our three campuses.
- It is exceptionally concerning that the current Chancellor appears to be soliciting applications for the position, superseding the Evaluation Committee Chair or Board Chair. As the current Chancellor would have affiliations with any internal candidates, this represents a direct conflict of interest.

The process outlined by the Board of Governors to identify the next Chancellor of the CSU System runs counter to the values and expectations of shared governance described in the

Academic Faculty & Administrative Professional Manual, on the CSU website (<https://webcms3.colostate.edu/about/shared-governance/>), and implicitly supported by university administration. It is critical that our institutions uphold these values. The absence of meaningful public engagement, the lack of a national search, and the implementation of an unnecessarily expedited timeline risk excluding highly qualified candidates and may foster perceptions of favoritism or nepotism. Such practices further undermine trust in institutional leadership and weaken the shared governance framework that has long defined Colorado State University.

As the state-appointed stewards of our institution and mission, the Chancellor search process is an affront to the commitment you have made to make decisions in the best interest of the Colorado State University System on behalf of its faculty, staff, and students. Against the backdrop of extreme and system-wide financial strain and diminished morale, the consequences of this decision in the hands of the Board of Governors will be felt for decades. The decision made by the board can serve to strengthen our institutions and System or weaken it and threaten our shared future.

Board members, we urge you to maintain your commitment to the best interest of Colorado State University and ensure an ethical, transparent, and robust search for our next Chancellor. We cannot risk a process that further undermines trust, weakens our shared governance framework, or jeopardizes the future of the CSU System. We implore you to modify the search process in recognition of these concerns.

With respect and hope,

Faculty Council Executive Committee