



CU Denver Faculty Assembly -- Meeting Minutes

December 3, 2024

Zoom

Attendees: Sasha Breger Bush, Dennis DeBay, Colleen Donnelly, Jamie Hodgkins, Sarah Fields, Maryam Darbeheshti, Wendy Bolyard, Diana White, Traci Sitzman, Vivian Shyu, Peter Anthamatten, Erin Hauger, Philip Joseph, Alejandra Medina, Jeff Schrader, Ester de Jong, Rashmi Gangamma, Kristin Kilbourne, Katy Divittorio, Manish Shirgaokar, Matt Shea, Rachel Stein, Gisella Bassani, Karen Sobel, Jason Machado, Bryn Harris, Anthony Villano, Thorsten Spehn, Kevin Hirth, Ryan Brown, Florian Pfender, Larry Erbert, David Bondelevitch, Eric Baker, Jody Beck, Jessica Valdez, Dan Maxey, Turan Kayaoglu, Constancio Nakuma, Antonio Farias, Chris Puckett, Douglas Sicker, Rachel Brown

Chair's Update (Sasha Breger Bush)

- Approve minutes (November 5, 2024)
- Motion was made to Approve, motion was seconded; Poll posted.
 - Results for November 5, 2024, Minutes: approved by a majority.
- **Microcredentials:** Discussion on naming conventions and approval process. FA Chair has been meeting with various stakeholders, gathering useful feedback from standing and subcommittees.
- **Graduate Education:** Collaborating with Provost Nakuma and AVC Michael Kocet to provide recommendations for the future of graduate education. Comments were provided on the scope of work for consultants who will be arriving next semester to assess current graduate structures and processes.
- **Budget Model:** Provost Nakuma and AVC Michael Kocet have also been working very closely with the Budget Priorities Committee (BPC), EVC Ann Sherman, and AVC Jen St Peter on long-term budget planning for graduate education. The goal is to plan 3-5 years ahead rather than reacting to short-term enrollment fluctuations. Ann Sherman's office remains open to faculty input and suggestions.
- **Accessibility Issues on Campus:** Working closely with the Disability Committee (DisC) and Chair to address and improve accessibility across campus. A huge shout out to the extensive efforts of the DisC committee.
- **Letter on Reduced Credit Bachelor's Degree:** All institutions in the state of Colorado have signed on to the letter, except CSU (who issued their own similar letter) and CU Anschutz. However, both CSU and CU Anschutz addressed the issues that have been raised. FA stands united with faculty across the state.
- **Board of Regents:** Ongoing frustration with the process of continuous policy review by the Regents and concern over the slow pace of policy review, particularly regarding semester schedules. FA Chair submitted a funding request to CU Denver and System for a rapid review team and both were denied. Educational Policy and University Standards (EPUS) continues to advocate with VP Michael Lightner's office for policy changes, addressing concerns over faculty service overload and respecting break periods. It is important for faculty to have adequate time to comment on and review these ongoing policies.

- **FA Budget:** FA Chair submitted next AY's budget to the Office of Faculty Affairs (OFA) late November. OFA will provide comments/approvals by February 1st, and FA Chair will update the assembly at that time.
- **Third Party Contractors:** Ongoing efforts to ensure faculty are consulted and informed about third-party contractors working on issues related to faculty, such as culture and HR reports. The goal is to ensure transparency regarding costs, actions taken, and how faculty are involved. Progress on this issue has been slow.
- **Comprehensive Compensation Collaborative (CCC) Third-Party Report-Mercer:** The report has been completed but not distributed. The report is currently being edited, but HR expects to share it soon.
- **Faculty Assembly Newsletter:** FA will begin to distribute semesterly newsletters starting Spring semester 2025. The first draft will be shared with the Executive Committee for review.
- **Faculty Course Questionnaires (FCQ) Working Group:** The working group is progressing steadily in revising the FCQs to prevent future data mining.
- **Immigration and Federal laws:** Ongoing discussions regarding immigration laws and their impact on faculty.
- **Acknowledgements:** Thanks to all those who chaired and participated in the Academic Transformation Working Groups. Appreciation extended to everyone for their hard work and contributions this year.

Faculty Advisory Committee to the Auraria Board (FACAB) Report (Diana White)

- Diana White presented the issue of FACAB and Student Advisory Committee to the Auraria Board (SACAB) representatives to the Auraria Board of Directors, which hold non-voting seats, something they are trying to change. The issue is that the state statute will have to change in order to allow these two entities voting rights. SACAB has been working to initiate these changes and has made significant progress by meeting with board members and Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC's) General Counsel. The goal is to get a resolution through the different committees and shared governance structures, with hopes of passing it by the January 22nd Auraria Board of Directors (ABOD) board meeting. The students have received unanimous approval from all involved groups to move forward with the resolution. A meeting was held with board member, Angie Rivera, who expressed immediate support. She emphasized that students, in particular, should have voting rights. Her support energized these efforts. The plan is to have board support by spring and then work on legislation in time for the 2026 session.
- Amendments to current FACAB Resolution: Three amendments to the current FACAB resolution were presented.
- Motion was made to Approve, motion was seconded; Poll posted.
 - Results: approved by a majority.

Provost's Update (Constancio Nakuma)

- **Academic Transformation Working Groups:** Provost thanked everyone involved in the ATWG process. Feedback on the four working groups has been overwhelmingly positive. The Provost stated that the work completed took many hours and has encouraged everyone to think creatively about the future of our institution, especially in terms of faculty workload, viable program offerings, and whether we are meeting student needs. Implementation will begin during the spring semester

and the final report and feedback that has been received this year will be shared. Provost Nakuma asked faculty to please continue providing input moving forward, as this is a strong example of shared governance in action.

- **Graduate Education:** Shared governance feedback has been gathered on the scope of work document prepared by the Council of Graduate Schools. This feedback was returned to the Council, and the coordinator is currently in the process of identifying three reviewers who will visit our campus the last week of February or the first week of March. These three consultants will be brought to CU Denver for a three-day visit and will engage with all stakeholders in graduate education, including department heads, program directors, deans, associate deans, and more. This will be an opportunity for all members to provide facts, opinions, and suggestions for improvement. A shared document will be created that includes feedback from all programs. These consultants are experts who will advise on ways to improve our graduate education operations. Their final report will be shared with the entire community.
- **Funding and Tuition Remission:** One time funding has been secured and a Tuition Remission Committee has been established, led by Michael Kocet, with FA members and a graduate student. Provost Nakuma said he hopes to have this structure in place by February.
- **Commencement and Holidays:** Provost Nakuma hopes to see everyone at the December 14th commencement ceremony. He thanked everyone for their hard work this year and wished everyone happy holidays and a good break.

Digital Accessibility Update (Antonio Farias, Chris Puckett, Douglas Sicker, Rachel Brown)

- VC Antonio Farias provided an update on the progress of digital accessibility efforts. All stakeholder groups, including Staff Council, Student Government Association, and FA have been engaged, with one school remaining to be visited. The push for digital accessibility is driven by two factors: Regent APS and State law, which both mandate compliance. The goal is to ensure CU Denver is an equity serving institution by 2030. This will not happen all at once, but will be a step-by-step approach, addressing issues incrementally.
- CU Boulder has shown progress, though they also continue to struggle and are under the Department of Justice's oversight.
- Counsel Chris Puckett emphasized the importance of making the university more accessible across the board. While the law sets minimum requirements, the university aims to exceed these standards. The main two points regarding compliance relate to responsiveness and having a plan in place. Faculty are doing a great job with accessibility, but the institution must also develop a long-term plan to ensure sustained compliance and make accessibility a part of the culture of CU Denver.
- VC Douglas Sicker highlighted that many of the challenges related to digital accessibility are IT related. A significant issue is with web services, particularly the large volume of PDFs, which pose challenges for accessibility. However, there are software producers, like Microsoft, who are already on board and striving to make their products more accessible. Also, as part of classroom modernization, the university is also examining whether new technologies are accessible and whether physical spaces align with digital accessibility. Collaboration with CU Boulder has resulted in Skillsoft lessons as an intro to digital accessibility, along with the Division for Teaching Innovation and Program Strategy (TIPS) to provide additional resources. Office of IT has been working with IT staff within schools/colleges/libraries to streamline the process of improving web accessibility and has partnered with University Communications (UCOMM) on these efforts.
- Douglas Sicker also let the assembly know his retirement date was in two weeks.

- Updates from DisC via zoom chat:
 - For information on accessible pedagogy and classroom accessibility, the FA Disabilities Committee (DisC) website is available: <https://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-assembly/denver-campus/denver-campus-committees/faculty-assembly-committees/disabilities-committee/inclusive-pedagogy>
 - Workshops on accessibility are offered each semester in collaboration with the Accessibility Operations Team and Center for Faculty Development and Advancement. An accessibility certificate will also be offered.
 - Upcoming events include a workshop on helping students with executive functioning (March 7) and a session on remediating PDFs (April, date TBD), with faculty incentives for participation.
 - Asynchronous training is available on Percipio (via Skillsoft) on "CU: Accessibility Fundamentals for Digital Communicators," providing useful information and techniques for making digital communications accessible. Faculty can register here: <https://cu-tips.corsizio.com/register/66e0ccdf369b00b4efa11ed0>
 - FA member also shared that some students do not have access to laptops, which limits their ability to participate in digital learning. She mentioned that the FAM program had donated computers to three eligible students but expressed a desire to expand this support to more students. Antonio Farias suggested implementing a laptop loaner program, where faculty could provide students with information on emergency resources for technology and include this on their syllabi.
 - Another FA member raised a concern that the burden of accessibility work might fall entirely on faculty. Antonio responded that there is currently no budget for accessibility, as it is an unfunded mandate. DisC Chair added that simple solutions can be implemented for the next generation of students, and the goal is to ensure that the university's intellectual property is accessible.
 - Antonio emphasized the need for an internal audit to assess the current state of digital accessibility. For areas requiring more technical expertise, the university may need to seek outside help or funding.
 - The goal is to establish clear objectives for accessibility each year, and to develop a long-term plan for moving forward. Government agencies require institutions to have a plan in place and to show progress on it.
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Closed Session

End Meeting