

Memo to: Phil DiStefano

Cc: Bob Boswell, Patrick O'Rourke, Russ Moore, Mark Kennedy, Ken McConnellogue

Subject: Boulder Chancellor fails first two tests of leadership on racial justice

From: Linda Shoemaker, CU Regent (CD-2) and Holly Olivarez, student

Date: August 26, 2020

As two examples of CU Boulder leadership missing the mark, the [IDEA Plan's](#) new [Community Council for Inclusion](#) (CCI) and the Chancellor's [Community Safety Task Force](#) announced this week and last show the lack of transparency and communication that are needed from leadership, especially on matters of race.

CCI and the IDEA Plan

As of August 17, 2020, the [Inclusion, Diversity, and Excellence in Academics \(IDEA\) Plan](#) to improve Boulder campus diversity and inclusion has finally been implemented after four years of development and after being finalized in October 2019. This is certainly good news; however, the IDEA Plan is an ambiguous document at best. Implementation details must be articulated. The devil is always in the details.

We have Ruth Woldemichael and Olivia Gardner to thank for making implementation happen, in conjunction with the Black Student Alliance, and in-step with the Black Lives Matter movement coming to the surface again following the brutal murder of George Floyd. Chancellor Phil DiStefano has finally given authority to Vice Chancellor Bob Boswell to set the IDEA plan in motion, and he approved the Plan's implementation.

Appendix B of the [IDEA Plan](#) articulates the sweeping powers of the Council for Community and Inclusion (CCI). It will inform strategy, make recommendations, manage and assess all diversity efforts. The CCI is a permanent standing committee with a budget and paid membership. It also has the power to appoint other members.

Suddenly, on August 13, CU Boulder Today [announced](#) the members of the CCI. We have major concerns with the process and structure of the CCI.

1) **Lack of Transparency.** We wonder how broad a pool of candidates were nominated for the [CCI](#) and who provided the nominations. The Chancellor's August 13 statement stated that "academic and administration leaders" were asked to make nominations.

2) **Lack of Communication.** DiStefano named 25 people consisting of, from what we can gather, 11 men, of which 8 are white; 5 white women, 10 people of color and one unknown person. Many of those named were not notified when they were nominated, nor when they were chosen. They did not have the opportunity to give consent and were not sent a copy of the Chancellor's August 13 [statement](#) that publicly named them.

3) **Lack of Accountability.** Because of the lack of communication with CCI prior to their appointment, we do not know if those people chosen even care to be active antiracists or if they are invested in doing effective antiracism work to create systems change at CU Boulder.

4) **Lack of Student Voice on CCI.** At the minimum membership described in Appendix B of the IDEA Plan, students would have made up one-third of the group. At 25 members, students [now](#) only constitute less than one-tenth of the expanded CCI.

Community Safety Task Force

On August 18, 2020, Chancellor DiStefano sent out a campus-wide email with an announcement of a [Community Safety Task Force](#), tasked “with the goal of strengthening accountability, building trust, and fostering greater transparency and engagement between campus police and the broader university community.” Everything in this email speaks to an audience that does not include the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community. The Community Safety Task Force is being formed in response to demands delivered by Ruth Woldemichael and Olivia Gardner, as well as other BIPOC students, yet Ruth nor Olivia were consulted until very recently (as in, the same day the email was sent).

This announcement also steps over the CU Student Government, whose Black Tri-Executive Isaiah Chavous had previously announced an interest in forming a student-led “Police Oversight Task Force.”

The sentiments shared by Ruth Woldemichael are that, in regards to DiStefano’s 8-item action plan and the Community Safety Task Force, ideas from Black students have been taken and manipulated to fit a different narrative. Ruth has sat in two CUPD meetings, yes, but she says her time was spent listening to CU representatives tell her of CU’s efforts. Meetings such as this do not qualify as productive, nor do any changes being made at a systems level. This is insensitive and unacceptable. DiStefano and Chief Jokerst’s actions perpetuate covert and structural racism. This type of behavior will no longer be tolerated by the BIPOC community and their allies.

If you need clarification on what action against racism would look like (also known as antiracism), below are suggestions:

- DiStefano’s statements regarding CUPD should acknowledge that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) do not feel safe on campus.
- Appoint someone of color who will hold CUPD accountable. A community safety task force led by the campus police chief cannot strengthen accountability; there is a conflict of interest when the chair of a committee represents the entity that needs to be held accountable.
- Appoint BIPOC students. Appointing representatives from CUSG and GPSG is not representative of those most impacted by bias, racism and police brutality. The student bodies of both are primarily white.

- Stop implying that campus “safety” by CUPD is mutually exclusive with supporting BIPOC students, staff and faculty. It is not.

In review, the tactics called out above, that have historically been used at CU Boulder, and that are currently being used by campus leaders at CU Boulder, are obvious and unacceptable. Hand in hand with the Chancellor’s defense of John Eastman’s widely denounced and debunked xenophobia in the name of academic freedom, these tactics fuel the anger and alienation of the BIPOC community at CU. Whether intentional or unintentional, you must stop this dismissive behavior immediately and instead engage with the BIPOC community on all levels to allow their work to be done. Engagement with the BIPOC community is how CU will increase racial diversity, and not doing this in the past is why the numbers have not increased, despite the diversity ‘champions’ you tout yourselves to be.