

An Invitation to Close a Historic Divide

An Academic Futures white paper from Strategic Resources and Support

Faculty and administrators in most universities come together daily to accomplish a variety of tasks. However, we do not often perceive ourselves to be "collaborators." Frequently, we encounter each other as adversaries - bound to represent our distinctive groups and monitor the behavior of the "other side." Thus we focus on negotiating compromise rather than on collaborating to create the most effective solutions.

Association of American Colleges and Universities, Linda McMillin, 2002

A statement of current state

Academics and administrators at CU Boulder have operated as if their responsibilities lie on either side of an imaginary divide. While this is common throughout institutions of higher education, operating in this manner leads to a lack of understanding of the complexity of roles throughout the institution, and a lack of trust and respect. Failing to draw upon the strengths of both groups leads to a failure of the university to deliver fully upon its promise of research, creativity and teaching.

Higher education is a rapidly changing landscape, including declining numbers of high school graduates, an increased student focus on access and affordability, and the need to respond to and develop the skills of lifelong learners. The accelerating pace of technological and societal change creates both opportunity and risk.

Without a doubt, recruiting and retaining preeminent faculty is essential to our future success. Pairing this with recruiting and retaining the best staff to serve our institution, in an environment of true collaboration, is what will make us stand out from our peers.

A future vision

The Strategic Resources and Support team (SRS) envisions a future CU Boulder that realizes the university's strategic imperatives through seamless collaboration and partnership. This high-trust, highly aligned environment will:

- Create an institution nationally recognized for nimble adaptability to faculty, researcher and student needs.
- Enable our students to build community – not only a home, but a network of collaborative partners and lifelong knowledge seekers.
- Enhance a tradition of world-class research.
- Eliminate unnecessary duplication of resources, enabling strategic “return on mission” investments in the university’s scholarly and creative work.
- Attract the most talented faculty, students and staff.

The case for collaboration

The competitive landscape within the higher education environment will require us to adopt an innovative approach in all we do. Changes in our student demographic, paired with changing

expectations in terms of the delivery of education and services provided, must drive us to continually assess how we respond to the student of 'today'. Further, we must realize that 'today' is an ever-shifting landscape of technology, globalism and industry disruption. Our commitment to our students, and their expectation, is to create a meaningful and productive life through their CU Boulder education. We can no longer do what we have been doing and expect to be successful in recruiting, retaining and graduating students who will become tomorrow's leaders.

CU Boulder is rightfully known as one of the world's best research universities, impacting humanity and driving a state and national economic engine. A strong faculty is the heart of the quality of our teaching, in addition to being necessary for world-class research. Recently President Benson remarked "When people ask me the single most important factor in making a university great, there's no question about the answer: a great faculty. And we have one." The faculty ultimately recruit and retain their colleagues and students. Creating an environment that attracts preeminent faculty requires strong coordination of resources from the SRS team (the support of Human Resources, Facilities Management, Finance, Enrollment Management and Strategic Relations) and close collaboration with the Academic team. If we do it right, others will ask, "What does CU Boulder do that makes them so successful in building relationships with their students and among faculty, regardless of discipline?"

Moving the needle

In the last year, we began to create avenues for authentic collaboration between the Academic and the SRS teams. Examples include participating in joint retreats, presenting strategic budget needs and discussing how we manage our enrollment. This type of collaboration – and more – is required to build a university that has the context and vision to place faculty and student needs at the forefront of everything we do.

These efforts give us a glimpse of possibilities that exist if we extend our partnerships and transform how we work together throughout the entire institution. Joining the expertise of our two teams will allow us to develop innovative solutions, even to challenges that may first appear as insurmountable. True collaboration and trust will make us more nimble and resilient, ready to cope with an increasingly uncertain future together.

A new work culture

CU Boulder's ability to thrive depends on the Academic and SRS teams – and all academic and staff teams – forming a whole greater than the sum of the parts as we face unprecedented change. This new, unified approach will create a space in which CU Boulder's unique strategic goals can be co-created and accomplished, allowing us to not only survive but thrive and stand out in the new world of higher education.

We imagine a future with a work culture that that has:

- *Open, trusted and trusting communications:* A culture where it is safe to pose problems, celebrate successes and express doubts and concerns, from personal to programmatic.
- *Teams of faculty, staff and students available to solve problems:* Whether focusing internally or externally, these high-functioning teams work on themselves first, developing communications, accountability, structure, and metrics before asking others to do the same.

- *Become a recognized national leader in a measurable vision of student success:* Our alignment of institutional resources behind a vision and imperatives lead to strategic goals, long-term plans and actionable projects.
- *Become an innovator in how we invite and utilize faculty expertise in all areas of administration, from energy management to communications.*
- *Full campus engagement in the university's vision, goals, plans and projects:* From the senior leadership, academic leadership including the deans, student administration, business administration to the students themselves we are aligned to serve the future of our community and by extension, our institution.
- *Reduced duplication and complexity:* We align our efforts and problem-solving in a continuum of resources and services, so that an effective and efficient campus core provides support, allowing for any necessary local specialization.
- *A culture of innovation throughout the university:* The spectrum of innovation will grow from applying innovation techniques in addition to our daily work, to innovation being how we work.
- *A culture that is accepting of creativity and failure:* A high-trust, highly aligned community will foster creative approaches to our common problems, and understands small experiments and failures are fundamental to innovation.

Our invitation to you

In closing, we offer this invitation to you to transform the university through closing this historic divide.

We invite you to:

- Ask for help when it's needed, and offer help when it's available.
- Involve us in creative conversations, and allow us to engage your experience and expertise.
- Question our actions, while trusting our intentions.
- Make us a part of your community, as we include you in ours.
- Ask for more and better communication as we strive to more actively listen to you.

Strategic Resources and Support

- Enrollment Management
- Finance and Business Strategy
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Infrastructure and Safety
- SRS Partner - Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance
- Strategic Relations and Communications