

Comments on Blue Ribbon Commission Draft Report February 2006

Listed below are the Blue Ribbon Commission members' responses to the BRC draft report on the University of Colorado at Boulder. Responses were requested by February 17. The messages sent are verbatim, copied below and organized by date received.

Cindy Brovsky for Wellington Webb - February 06, 2006

Hi Carmen,

Mayor Webb has received updates from members of the Blue Ribbon Commission. He is on his way to Mrs. King's funeral in Atlanta and wanted me to pass along the following information.

He wants the university to seriously look at a request from minority students about the lack of leadership training for ethnic organizations an issue that was raised at the town hall meeting. The Black Student Alliance made an appeal to send their leadership to student government leadership training sessions. This is something that could be sponsored by corporations and one estimated cost is \$16,000.

This is an important issue to the students.

Thank you,
Cindy Brovsky

Sheldon Steinhauser – February 8, 2006

Thanks for sharing the BRC Draft Report. I want to commend President Brown, the Chancellor and everyone who was responsible for the process and mechanisms that enabled the BRC to do so much within such a limited time, realizing that there is never enough time in a day to do all that we might have liked. Hopefully, the work of the BRC will have an ongoing component, so that it can help to monitor and encourage the crucial work to follow, beyond the three formal meetings.

I think the report is comprehensive and thorough and accurately reflected the day's information-sharing, responses to questions and small group discussions, the latter insofar as I was privy to those (in the one group I attended). Recommendations concerning the Boulder campus-Boulder community are certainly appropriate at this time; the full range of system-wide approaches will obviously await the conclusion of the next several BRC meetings.

I would underscore again that we are dealing with both the overall attention to diversity as a primary value of higher education, cutting across race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., as well as the need to deal with specific issues of race. Only if the overall diversity climate is addressed, along with specific recruiting, admissions, retention, and related issues can we hope to make real progress over time. That has implications for leadership commitment at the very

top, for recruitment, promotion and retention of a quality diverse staff (not alone those specifically charged with formal diversity efforts), and for ongoing diversity awareness, education and successful achievements as part of evaluations of every administrator. It must be backed by sufficient resources to encourage success, with both a short and long term time frame and goals that stretch but are achievable.

Throughout the discussions, I was struck by the awareness of Commissioners that we were not competent to evaluate the various diversity programs, based upon the limited time at our meeting. The University should continually evaluate programs, retaining those that work, and properly funding same; those that are not effective should be eliminated. Commitment to diversity backed by resources is crucial, but rather than simply supporting increased funding for diversity programs, let's enhance the effective programs and aim for new and creative efforts (properly funded so they succeed). The efforts of diversity staff, operating as they are in a difficult economic environment with insufficient human and financial resources, should be acknowledged and supported, while recognizing that diversity must not be consigned only to diversity professionals and "formal" diversity programs but should be every staff member's responsibility. I certainly include faculty and students as well, together with those involved with the University and University-supported activities who serve in unpaid positions of leadership.

I think the emphasis on evaluation is appropriate. Again, determine that which works, visibly commend those efforts and "fund it like you mean it."

I applaud the concept that there must be immediate, public, highly visible expressions of outrage when incidents occur, beginning with the President. I speak not only of racial incidents but of any that reflect group hatred. There must be no mistaking the University's position, speaking with one voice, and that voice should not be treated as a casual response that gets buried in a brief item on the page pages.

I do not believe I heard anyone calling for a "lowering of standards." Rather, we should look to see if there are in fact barriers that keep talented students from looking to CU as their primary goal for a college education, entering the admissions pool, accepting our admissions offers, being sufficiently prepared to make a satisfactory transition to campus life and being monitored/supported to maximize their retention.

Thanks again for all the good work. While I will not be at the second meeting because of an out-of-town commitment, I look forward to the third meeting and the discussions to follow.

My best wishes.

James E. Bye - February 9, 2006

1. Preliminary. I believe the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) is attempting to reach conclusions before there is sufficient discussion or, in some cases, sufficient information. My comments thus are made with that caveat.

2. Definition of Diversity. The recommendations assume that diversity of students and faculty at the University of Colorado at Boulder is desirable (I concur) without saying why diversity is desirable, how it makes education better, or how it enhances equal opportunity. I believe a statement is essential. I think diversity includes differences of ethnic background, cultural background, economic advantages or disadvantages, and a student's and his family's educational experiences.
3. Recommendation 1. Support programs, to encourage students to fully take advantage of the educational and learning opportunities at CU, are essential. Programs to help high school students prepare for college, such as the Pre-Collegiate Development Program (PCDP), are also essential for the students and to allow CU to attract qualified students. Perhaps a support group for students at CU who participated in the PCDP would be desirable. Evaluations of support programs by the students is more useful than evaluations by BRC members.
4. Perpetrators of Intolerance. Perpetrators of acts of intolerance should be expelled from CU. However, expelling students who do not like diversity but who do not commit intolerant acts is, in effect, eliminating diversity of opinion.
5. Recommendation 2. Recommendation 2 is essential. The excuse by six of the nine Regents that their schedules did not permit them to attend the first meeting of the BRC is pitiful. Other attendees, including me, cancelled other meetings in order to attend. Why cannot the Regents admit they erred and commit to attend future meetings?
6. Recommendation 3. A continuing excuse as to why there are not more ethnic minorities at CU is that there are not enough qualified applicants. This excuse reminds me of the wailing by academics when G.I.s entered higher education institutions following World War II. The academics claimed education standards would be destroyed. The academics were wrong. Those returning G.I.s probably would not have met the 103 Index standards; but they were hardworking, successful students who, as a group, improved the academic performance of the educational institutions. There must be some flexibility to try to recognize those minority students who have a good opportunity to succeed without regard to Index 103. CU does it for athletes.
7. Pre-Collegiate Development Program. One hundred percent of the graduates of the PCDP graduated from high school. Those students are prepared to go to college. Chancellor Byyny has asserted that most of them would be successful students at CU if CU had a scholarship program to help induce them to enter CU. The PCDP is being used in school districts that have mostly economically disadvantaged children. The PCDP should be targeting those children who frequently come from a minority ethnic background, which should provide a pool of applicants.
8. Recommendations 4 and 5. There needs to be a process for handling complaints by students, faculty and others where they perceive discrimination or negative statements are occurring. I do not think students or faculty should be tested on their responses to diversity.

9. Recommendations 6, 7, 8 and 10. I question any special effort to go to big corporations to find out how to write mission statements. Working with other educational institutions seems to me to be much more useful.
10. Recommendation 9. I agree in principle. However, CU should take care of its own problems first.
11. Observations. The students at the conference suggested that improvement in numbers of minority students would not occur until the atmosphere toward minority students improved. It seems to me that both numbers and atmosphere need to change together. The atmosphere is unlikely to improve unless the numbers also improve.

Jessica Peck - February 09, 2006

Dear Fellow Commissioners,

I have sent the attached letter to President Brown today, asking that we delay any commission findings until we are given adequate budget information. Once we are given this information, I'm asking that we are given at least a month to look it over.

I believe very strongly that if we are to do our job effectively as the BRC, we must have complete information first. I hope you will join me in this effort.

Jessica Peck Corry

Jeremy Jimenez - February 17, 2006

The notes seem to be accurate. I would like to comment where one member stated how Elise Robbins was hostile to a member. I did not witness hostility but rather a presenter who did not let the group get side tracked from the actual topic of discussion.

Thanks,
Jeremy Jimenez

Louise Young - February 17, 2006

Mary Ann,

Here are my comments on the draft BRC report from the 1/21/06 meeting. I think the staff did a tremendous job in accurately capturing what happened during that meeting. My comments are quite minor.

Recommendation #2.

first sentence in the first paragraph after the recommendation: suggest changing word "value" to "values".

Same paragraph, I would offer this additional sentence after the first sentence (ending in "publicized").

"This example of a potential values statement was generated during one of the small group breakouts and presented during the outbrief to the reconvened group."

Recommendation #3:

I would take material from the very last section (on page 6) to expand and explain this recommendation. For example, Numbers 3, 4, 5 and 6 (on page 6 of the report) offer some potential materials to expand on Recommendation #3.

Recommendation #9:

I would take material from the very last section (on page 6) to expand and explain this recommendation. For example, Number 3 at the very top of page 6 of the report talks about summer programs and could be used to expand on Recommendation #3.

This is all I have. Again, congratulations on a job well done.

Regards,
Louise

David Davenport - February 17, 2006

Hello Ms Sergeant,

First of all, thank you for doing an excellent job of pulling together the notes taken at the January 21 meeting. It was nice to see the comments from the other five breakout groups.

I have the following recommendation for updates and/or additional comments to the report.

In the Draft Report, on page 5, in the third paragraph that begins "*The commissioners made specific recommendations about retention programs*", I am concerned about specific references to MASP, McNeill, and ELLC as programs that stand out above the rest. Students indicated that they felt all programs need to be retained because they serve different needs, hence pointing out these three programs as standing above the rest is sending a message that I don't think the commission intended to send. I get the impression that other programs on campus would be in the list if the commissioners had an opportunity to interact with each of the actual programs.

My only other comment is to my fellow commissioners about how we communicate with the

press, and each other. We have had several notes going back and forth about the comments made by commissioner Jessica Peck Corry via her letter to President Brown in regards to the Diversity budget items. We need to establish how we plan to communicate statements that are truly agreed to by the whole commission versus points of view of individual commissioners, so we can avoid some of the tension that has been going back and forth during the most recent couple of weeks. I feel this is important to ensure that we do not lose our official focus on improving the climate around diversity at each of the CU campuses; hence I suggest we formalize how we make statements and indicate whether it is a commission statement versus a commissioner statement at our next meeting on March 4.

Sincerely,
David L. Davenport

Mike Avritt – February 18, 2006

I reviewed the draft report and found it to be accurate and complete. I do have an addition to be made to the notes for Group 1 Discussion Notes, regarding last comment under “What role can communities play in partnering...”, as background. This is from the Ft. Lewis web site < http://www.fortlewis.edu/shared/content_objects/homepage//why_attend_flc.pdf >. If one looks under the History section there is an explanation of why and how Ft. Lewis provides tuition for Native students. Fort Lewis College is named after a former U.S. Army post established in the late 1870s in southwest Colorado. In 1891, it became a boarding school for American Indians. Twenty years later, [Congress gave the school to the State of Colorado with the agreement that American Indians would be offered tuition-free education](#). Fort Lewis became an agricultural high school in 1911 and later evolved into a junior college. The campus moved to its present-day Durango site in 1956, first offered four-year degree programs in 1962, and graduated its first baccalaureate class in 1964. [Fort Lewis honors its sacred trust by offering tuition stipends to qualifying Native American students](#).

Mike Avritt