

ACADEMIC FUTURES (AF) ADDENDUM

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During the Academic Futures review meeting of 25 September 2018, after comments by several faculty members from the Residential Academic Programs, a participant said, "Let the record reflect priorities for instructors at CU," and it was suggested that we submit a document with our concerns to be entered into the official record of the Academic Futures review. Therefore, please consider the following concerns and insights, compiled with input from about 12 of my fellow RAP Instructors and Senior Instructors, in person and via email. We will be happy to expound upon any of these points to add clarity or examples, and we would welcome any request for further discussion as it relates to the Academic Futures process or the First Year Experience transition. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak out in defense of the RAPs as one of the most valuable institutions on the CU-Boulder campus.

- The Academic Futures (AF) draft report stressed the importance of providing "all of our students an excellent first year (FY) at CU Boulder" (p 37). The Residential Academic Programs (RAPs) have a long history (48 years) of achieving this goal. Despite many white papers being submitted about the RAPs and their value to the university, the draft report only mentioned RAPs once (p. 37). In contrast, newer programs such as the First-Year Seminars (FYS) were singled out and commended multiple times throughout the document (e.g., pp. 10, 11, 20, 35, 43, 44, 67, 78). The lack of reference to the RAPs in this document versus the promotion of the FYS is inequitable and deeply troubling, especially considering the long experience and close knowledge of the RAP faculty in working with first-year students.
- While the RAPs seem to be ignored in the final document, we were told (on 9/25/18) by the AF representatives, "Don't worry, we are allowing each college to determine what their RAPs will look like, and we didn't want to replicate the work done by the Foundations of Excellence and Inclusive Excellence teams."
- We were also told that there is "no intention to exclude or marginalize RAPs."
- RAPs would like to know about how we can collaborate and partner with First Year Interest Groups (FIGs) to enhance the first year/ freshman experience for all.
- RAP instructors are concerned that decisions will continue to be made by upper level administration from the top down, even after this transparent democratic process of AF.
- Instructors and lecturers, who comprise the majority of RAP teachers, are the most vulnerable faculty members on campus; we don't know if we should worry about whether we will have a job in a few years (if the RAPs are eventually eliminated), whether we should start looking for another job or career, or consider moving on.
- We also do not know whether other faculty members, academic departments, or upper administration properly recognize or appreciate the value that RAP faculty contribute to the university, to students across disciplines and programs, and all the stated goals is sufficiently recognized and appreciated it is important to acknowledge all the additional hours in office, spent with students on outings, co-curricular events, etc. that we do not do in our main campus departments -- is that somehow calculatable and thus noted by the university?
- It is also important to recognize that RAP faculty informally advise and write countless letters of recommendation for students for *years* after our students work with us in their first year. We

are often the only faculty members they ever knew personally, and we are able to speak to their abilities skills, and scholarly experiences.

- Perhaps a tenure process for non-TT instructors would place more value on teaching and pedagogy and service.
- Departments need to learn more about the role of RAP instructors – the problem is that they are largely unaware of what we contribute to the university, and we are often excluded from our home department events and regular recognition.
- RAP instructors need to be consulted on issues that concern us, such as whether or not to close a RAP, how RAP directors are chosen, and funding decisions.
- Someone commented in the meeting that low SES (socio-economic status) students are “excluded by the RAPs and mostly live in Will Vill” where there are no RAPs.... It is important to recognize that RAPs offer a lot of support to low SES students by
 1. waiving the RAP fee when requested (and the A&S college could offer scholarships to this end as well),
 2. training and paying upper division students (and formerly grad students in Williams Village North WVN) to serve as peer mentors and academic support staff, and
 3. connecting RAP students to campus services such as Student Academic Services (SASC) and Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS).
- Will Vill would be a perfect place for FIGs!!! Don’t deplete valuable RAP spaces on main campus where RAPs function very well; use the Will Vill towers for FIGs where such academic support and focus is greatly needed.
- WVN should be a sustainability Residence Hall with 3 tracks: pre-business, engineering (SbD RAP), and social science (SSI RAP). This would allow for resident hall-wide events that would be available and beneficial for any of those RAP students. This would also allow these sustainability-minded programs to access the new Village Center that is designed to feature sustainability and accommodate large events. It is also the home of the new Innovation Center. The fact that 2 of these sustainability RAPs were canceled right when this new center was completed was a missed opportunity to promote an integrated innovation and entrepreneurship experience for undergraduates on the campus. This is especially unfortunate because the Research and Innovation Office (RIO) and the campus more generally has worked hard to put innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainability front and center in CUBoulder’s priorities. . Recruiting would have to be redesigned to attract first year students to Will Vill (something the RAPs are aware of). Will Vill is one of the best places to live on campus especially if we can find a creative solution and market WVN as a cutting edge entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainability space with LEED platinum status and th Village Center dining and entrepreneurship spaces in the same complex!
- RAP directors should be allowed to have Associate Professor status; if RAP instructors (with some minimum of experience in RAPs) want to be considered for these positions, they should be allowed to compete, and to be compensated with an additional set salary rather than the percentage that is offered to tenured professors who make much more the non-TT faculty.
- RAP instructors should be compensated at a competitive rate rather than the flat rate (\$40,000 starting salary regardless of experience) that only increases at 1-2%/yr.
- Willard (right next to C4C and Farrand) could be used as the space on central campus for those not requesting a RAP. Right now it is used for students staying here year-round, but that is a disadvantage for them, because they could have air conditioning if they were in Will Vill. They could also have a building not plagued by bugs in the summer, which was evidently the case this past summer. Will Vill is often the choice of students staying in the halls longer than a year

anyway, in part because it offers so many assets—great dining, their own workout facility, and a lot of community that gets built due to location, plus easy access to open space and bike/running paths.

- The other important point is one with which the Provost himself agreed at a town hall in spring 2018. The first-year seminars get special praise in the AF. But RAPs *multiply the benefits of the first-year seminars in that their students get from 2 to 4 times as many small seminars with most of the qualities of the first-year seminars as *well as the living-learning community context that studies across the nation have shown to increase both learning and contentment with one's university experience.
- Some RAP instructors are very concerned about these statements:
 - (p. 35) "The first-year experience should be a collective, campus-wide effort involving both academic and co-curricular.....Funding for academic courses should be handled by the provost's office."
 - **Does that mean the RAP funding, too? How will the funding be regulated?**
 - (p. 39) In their first year, all freshmen will have the following core experiences:
 - "A freshman seminar--an expansion of our highly successful program being run out of the Undergraduate Education; these courses have proven to provide students with rich educational experiences that introduce them to the kind of academic work done at the university".
 - "These classroom experiences would serve to help transition students to university life....".
 - **However, there was no mentioning of freshmen being in a RAP program or the success of the RAPs (We've been around for 40 years and have been very successful!). We are worried that the provost will overlook the RAPs and allow the expansion of the FYS without supporting the RAPs. Will the RAPs be cut back to support the FYS?**
- Finally, RAP directors have been incredible advocates for the RAP faculty, and they have helped turn so much potential into reality across campus. The Program Coordinators work on the frontlines supporting students (and you cannot replace these highly experienced members of the first year experience with student workers—it is NOT the same). For example, several Program Coordinators have Master's degrees, and they have gathered a lot of knowledge of our campus built up OVER TIME. They also are the ones who are there when students cannot print a paper, need advice on classes, or are depressed and need help.
- RAPS are excited to be inclusive and work together toward a positive solution in collaboration with Freshman seminars to provide a wide array of academic and residential experiences.