To: CU Boulder Staff Council and CEAS Staff Council

From: [Redacted]

Date: May 4, 2020

Subject: CU Leadership During COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear CU Boulder Staff Council and College of Engineering and Applied Science (CEAS) Staff Council, I am reaching out to respectfully express my opinion on the way our University of Colorado (CU) Board of Regents, system and Boulder campus have communicated crucial information to its employees, particularly that of staff. I would like for these opinions to create discussion points in your next meeting. I am kindly requesting for you to review the four points presented in this letter, engage in meaningful and time-sensitive conversations, and present actionable solutions to leaders of the CU campus, system and Board of Regents. I sincerely ask you take into consideration the extensive work staff have put on to hold our CU system together throughout the devastating COVID-19 pandemic.

From March 1 to May 4, I received a minimum of *30 unique emails from multiple CU Boulder campus and CU system leaders (Board of Regents, President, Chancellor, Associate Vice Chancellor, Provost, COO, CEAS Interim Dean, etc.), with updates on COVID-19 and the impact it has had, continues to have and will continue having on our community. Below, you will find specific points I would like to highlight about these emails.

When to send COVID-19 email updates:
While transparency is crucial (more on that later), consistency is just as important. Of the 30 emails I received with information on COVID-19, one-third of them were sent on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday. I am a firm believer important emails are best sent Monday through Thursday. Often times, we are bombarded with emails earlier in the week, thus find ourselves playing catch-up towards the end of the week. For this reason, if important emails are sent on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, they may very well be missed. May I suggest more consistency in the timing of these important emails? For example, as it pertains to the scenario in hand, if I knew University leaders emailed us every Monday and Thursday, I would be more likely to read their emails the same day they are sent. Additionally, this would encourage University leaders to provide more lucid and concise email updates.

Day of the week CU leadership sent the 30 unique emails on COVID-19:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of the Week</th>
<th>Number of Sent Emails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Day of the week CU Leadership sent the 15 “COVID-19 Update” emails:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of the Week</th>
<th>Number of Sent Emails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why transparency matters:
On April 1, our CEAS Interim Dean, Keith Molenaar, sent an email inviting students and employees to attend an online open forum hosted by our Provost, Russ Moore. Unfortunately, the invitation was sent less than three hours before the online open forum commenced. While we were encouraged to ask questions and share ideas and concerns regarding the activities of the Division of Academic Affairs at CU Boulder, many of us were unable to do so, due to having prior commitments. Had we been notified within a reasonable time, we could have been part of the conversation. Moreover, receiving an invite directly from our Provost may have been more appropriate.

College of Engineering and Applied Science
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

April 1, 2020

Dear students, faculty and staff,

Provost Russ Moore will be hosting an online open forum for the College of Engineering and Applied Science today at 2 p.m. The Zoom meeting information is below.

Students, faculty and staff are invited and encouraged to join online, ask questions and share ideas and concerns regarding the activities of the Division of Academic Affairs at CU Boulder and changes to teaching, learning, scholarship and creative work during this semester.

I hope that you can attend for some or all of this time.

Keith Molenaar
Interim Dean

Join Zoom Meeting
https://cuboulder.zoom.us/j/230553694
  Meeting ID: 230 553 694

One tap mobile
+13462487799, 230553694# US (Houston)
+16699006833, 230553694# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
+1 253 215 8782 US
+1 301 715 8592 US

Meeting ID: 230 553 694
Find your local number: https://cuboulder.zoom.us/w/aAVQAs31

College of Engineering and Applied Science | University of Colorado Boulder
303-492-5071 | oump@colorado.edu | www.colorado.edu/engineering
422 UCB, Boulder, CO 80309

Fast-forward a couple of weeks, and on April 16, a special meeting of the Board of Regents was scheduled to take place. Fortunately, one of the CU Boulder Staff Council members informed me of the meeting, so I was able to watch it online. However, neither one of us were notified of the special meeting within a reasonable time. To be clear, we were both notified within 24 hours of the meeting. Although I am thankful to have had the opportunity to watch the meeting online, I was, yet again, not thrilled with the short notice.
I wanted to pass along from Deb Prestiani.

FYI –
A special meeting of the Board of Regents is scheduled for tomorrow morning. See below for details on how to view this if you have interest, and your time permits. The sender, Ryan Untitz, is the Chair of the University of Colorado Staff Council.

Best, Deb Prestiani

From: Untitz, Ryan <Ryan.Untitz@ucdenver.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2020 10:27 AM
Subject: Tune in: Special Regents' Meeting, Tomorrow at 8:00 AM

Good morning colleagues,

I am writing to pass along a bit of an update. I know each of us have been hearing from our colleagues about their anxieties and worries about what the future might look like in the midst of the current situation. The Board of Regents will be holding a special board meeting tomorrow morning at 8:00 am. It sounds like some of your questions may be addressed during that meeting, so I'd like to invite you to listen in online.

You can now watch livestreamed board meetings though the following link: https://cu.newspanit.com/views/932/

When a meeting is currently underway, the top "Watch Live" link will be active and you can tune in. You can also watch past board meetings as well. Feel free to share with your colleagues and your campus councils, since these meetings are open to the public.

Thanks again for all you do, and stay healthy.

Warmly,
Ryan

Ryan Untitz, MS, PHR
He/him/his
Chair, University of Colorado Staff Council
Vice Chair, CU Denver | Anschutz Staff Council
unce@uc.edu | Ryan.Untitz@ucdenver.edu | 303-315-2714

I want to be part of conversations that could potentially impact, whether positively or negatively, our students and employees. When I am invited to meetings or open forums, I expect to be given proper notice. In addition to this being inherently polite, it is also the professional thing to do. When I am invited to important meetings without time to prepare for them, I feel undervalued as a staff member. Even worse, I also feel like the organization I work for does not care for my presence or could potentially have information to hide. To be specific, I am only referring to meetings established days or weeks before invitees are alerted. I would sincerely appreciate receiving invitations in a reasonable time. This gives me the opportunity to decide whether I need, should and/or could attend a meeting. Ultimately, this is an issue of transparency, and transparency matters.

Impact on performance evaluations:
On April 3, Provost Moore sent out an email to all faculty, instructors, lecturers, and graduate students on the changes to spring 2020’s FCQ administration. The email specifically stated “Spring 2020 FCQ course summary data will not be accessible to units for the purposes of instructional evaluation, including faculty annual merit review; faculty reappointment, promotion and tenure review…” Although this is a significantly impactful decision, I was surprised to see how little attention it received on a larger scale. How come some employees were alerted of the changes and others were not?

Despite my disagreement with the decision, I do believe all employees should have been made aware of it. The reason for this is because the decision raises questions on how staff performance evaluations will be assessed spring of 2020. Will staff be held to similar standards, or will our performance evaluation process continue moving forward as usual? More importantly, will our spring 2020 performance impact our annual merit or promotions? COVID-19 has impacted everyone on campus, not just students and faculty. Could we receive clarification on how staff evaluations will be assessed spring of 2020? Please keep in mind, I am not saying we should or should not consider spring 2020 in our performance evaluation. I acknowledge and commend staff who have had to put in the extra work during these difficult times, in order to compensate for our difficulties. With that being said, it would be appropriate and justifiable for staff to also receive adjustments to our performance evaluation process – as it pertains to spring 2020 – if we so choose.
Friday, Apr. 3, 2020

Dear (name):

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, CU Boulder students and faculty have had to unexpectedly engage in remote teaching and learning—many for the first time—making this midterm transition disruptive for all. In the last several weeks, I have instituted several changes to academic policy and practice to ease some of the stress on students and faculty caused by this sudden shift.

Today, after consultation with the deans of the schools and colleges, and with the Boulder Faculty Assembly, I am announcing changes to the spring 2020 administration of Faculty Course Evaluations (FCQs). These changes are designed to alleviate faculty anxiety about this end-of-semester process in these unprecedented times.

Student evaluations of our courses are mandated by University of Colorado System policy, and for good reason. It is important that our students be able to voice their honest opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of instruction. At the same time, faculty and students alike recognize that nothing is normal about the spring 2020 semester. Usual forms of assessment must change to meet these unusual circumstances.

A number of faculty, graduate student teachers, and staff members have advocated that course evaluation data from spring 2020 not be used for evaluative processes, such as faculty annual merit evaluation; faculty reappointment, promotion and tenure review; or GPTI and TA review for teaching appointments. In addition, many have characterized the standard FCQ question set, which focuses on the student’s experience of the class as a finished product (a "summative" evaluation), as unsuited to a semester in which instructors have had to reinvent their courses midstream. I find these arguments persuasive.

For these reasons, course evaluations for spring 2020 will change as follows:

- Spring 2020 FCQ responses will be shared with only the instructor. Reports will not be distributed to departments, and data will not be compiled or posted online.
- Spring 2020 FCQ course summary data will not be accessible to units for the purposes of instructional evaluation, including faculty annual merit review; faculty reappointment, promotion and tenure review; or review for the continuation of GPTI and TA teaching appointments. A faculty candidate for reappointment, tenure or promotion may choose to add spring 2020 FCQ course summary data to the file at the time of review, but doing so is entirely optional.
- Units that use FCQ data as a basis for faculty annual merit review are instructed to recalculate their formulas to omit spring 2020 data.
- A different question set will be used for spring 2020 FCQs administered April 4 or later to give instructors "formative" assessment of their instruction ("What worked well? What can I do better?") rather than "summative" assessment ("Were students satisfied with the course?").
  - This set of 17 questions was developed and piloted in 2016-17 by the three-campus FCQ Redesign Project, whose committees included faculty, staff and students across the CU Boulder campus, including BFA representation, faculty involved in the Discipline Based Education Research group, and others. More information, including the list of questions, is available at the spring 2020 FCQ information page.
- There will be no custom questions on the FCQ in spring 2020, due to limited resources and because FCQ responses will be shared only with instructors. Custom questions are requested by the college, school or department and include, for example, Teaching Quality Framework questions or questions for accreditation. Canvas or Qualtrics surveys are recommended as alternatives to FCQs for these questions.

FCQ administration for spring 2020 will be the same as in previous semesters:

- FCQs will run on the existing schedule. FCQs will be administered online, and students will be notified to complete the FCQ as usual.
- Faculty will access and download their FCQ reports from the Campus Labs portal after final grades have been posted. FCQ reports will be available at noon, on Wednesday, May 13.

For more details, please see the spring 2020 FCQ information page. You may also reach out to your department's FCQ coordinator with questions.

Thank you for your continued commitment and hard work during this challenging semester. Take care of yourselves and one another, and be sure to check the CU Boulder coronavirus updates and resources page for the most current information.

Sincerely,

Russell Moore
Provost
The importance of using inclusive language:
In most cases, emails sent out to university employees address “staff” last in the email opening line. How come “staff” rarely comes first? Some may interpret this as staff not being recognized as equally important employees to the university, when compared to faculty. Others may not care at all about the wording and may find this to be a ridiculous argument. However, as minor as this may seem, being last so frequently perpetuates the idea staff are an afterthought. Perhaps the reason why it is a minor topic for many, is because the thought of “faculty always come first and staff always come second”, has already been ingrained in our minds, writing and practices.

Of the 30 emails I received – 15 of which contain “COVID-19 Update” in the subject line – 17 named faculty before staff and one (4.1.20 – Subject: Timeline extended for CEAS new dean search) named staff before faculty in the email opening line. I am not saying we should address emails with “staff and faculty”, but I do believe inclusive language would encompass unity amongst all employees, regardless of their role on campus. For example, “Dear CU Boulder Community/Employees/Team” offers an alternate word-choice that does not emphasize specific roles.

Number of times each email opening line was used in the 15 “COVID-19 Update” emails:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email Opening Lines</th>
<th>Number of Times Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dear CU Boulder faculty and staff</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear CU Boulder faculty, staff and students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dear (CU Boulder) students, faculty and staff</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear members of the CU Boulder community</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear Faculty and Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line did not begin with “Dear…”, instead, email began with the date (March 26, 2020)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Number of individual emails sent to us by CU leaders in the 15 “COVID-19 Update” emails:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email Sender</th>
<th>Number of Emails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phillip DiStefano, Chancellor</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russ Moore, Provost</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick O’Rourke, Chief Operating Officer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Kennedy, President</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Jones, Associate Vice Chancellor for Integrity, Safety and Compliance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With Respect,

*Only includes emails directly sent to us from CU leadership. Does not include emails sent from CU Boulder Today, CU Connections or CU Engineering.
**Email opening line began with either “Dear CU Boulder students, faculty and staff” or “Dear students, faculty and staff.”
*** Some emails were sent by multiple individuals (i.e. Russ Moore and Patrick O’Rourke).