

October 13, 2021

To: Alessandra Wilson, Sophia Khan, Benjamin Capeloto, Taylor Weinsz, and Kavya Kannan  
From: Chancellor DiStefano and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Bradley-Armstrong  
Subject: Resetting expectations and next steps with CU Student Government leadership

Presidents Kannan, Khan, Capeloto and Weinsz, and Chief Justice Wilson,

We are writing to you to acknowledge the trauma and pain of your experiences as our CU Student Government (CUSG) leadership team—and to reset expectations for how we will move forward together.

The escalation of discord this week is the outcome of growing levels of harm, frustration and distrust, both within the branches of student government and between members of CUSG and our campus administration. As many of you have noted recently and through the experiences of previous groups of CUSG leaders, it is also symptomatic of a dated governance structure in need of re-envisioning.

As our campus works to become more diverse, inclusive and anti-racist, many of us are reckoning with the traumas we've experienced and the challenges of learning to engage more authentically across experiences and identities—not to mention the difficulties of evolving from how we have worked in the past to how we must change for the future.

We empathize with your frustration. We recognize your pain. We acknowledge the challenging situation we are in together. And we are here to work with you, as leaders, find a productive path forward for CUSG—not only for the coming year, but for the legacy of your work in service to our student body for many years to come.

With that said, our campus has immediate needs we must address together to enable that path forward:

- 1. We need to heal the harm and re-establish respect, civility and mutual care in your work together as our student leaders.** The infighting and issues of inequity, racism, sexism and hostility you have raised since this summer must be addressed. OIEC is following up on these reports and allegations. We recognize, however, that we need to address not only the current allegations, but to change the culture in CUSG to better support you and the students you serve. Vice Chancellor Bradley-Armstrong and I are engaging directly with the leaders of each branch of student government. Following those discussions, the Student Affairs team will be proposing options for you to engage in a facilitated process for healing harm and re-establishing your leadership roles and professional relationships with each other. We need your help in identifying how we can best support your ability to work productively together in support of students as quickly as possible.

**2. We need to activate the critical functions of CUSG by ratifying appointments and hiring staff.** These appointments are operational necessities that serve the success and well-being of thousands of students. They also provide vital wages for the many appointees who need to earn salaries to afford living expenses. While acknowledging the underlying issues raised by CU Legislative Council we must work together to address, we hereby expect that students who were offered positions are confirmed and able to start their roles immediately.

**3. We need you to come together to discuss the Chancellor's agreement.** Staff have previously offered to review the Chancellor's agreement with each branch. We are offering again, and, in moving forward, it is important for the three branches to come together to review, discuss and understand how the chancellor's agreement supports the autonomy and critical work of CUSG on behalf of our student body.

**4. We need you to come to the table to re-envision CU Student Government.** With Student Affairs as your primary partner—and with support from our campus leadership—we will assist you in a collaborative, visible process to arrive at mutually agreeable updates to the CUSG operating model—including its values, processes and by-laws—that will address the structural issues you've identified this semester and position CU Student Government as an example for other university student bodies to follow.

As your campus leaders, we are fully committed to the strong legacy of positive impact, campus influence and service to the greater good that are hallmarks of CUSG—and we want to help you expand that legacy in the years ahead.

We are also here to ensure you have the structures and support required to run one of the nation's largest and most influential student governments, the partnerships and mentoring each new group of leaders needs to advance student government priorities each year, and the built-in counsel and support of a chancellor and student affairs team who are here to help you navigate moments of crisis and discord precisely like this one.

As student and campus leaders, we are in this together, and we have to find a way forward. As your administrative partners, we are eager to work with you to turn the challenges you are facing today into the progress you will make moving forward. Please share this letter with your colleagues throughout CUSG, so that expectations and next steps are met and we can collectively build a better system for the future of CU Student Government.

Sincerely,

Philip P. DiStefano, Chancellor  
Akirah Bradley-Armstrong, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs