

## Advisory Council Action Team

September 12, 2013

*Identify key strategies at CU-Boulder and evaluate whether they encourage a culture of innovation and collaboration externally and internally. Include those in our immediate control and those that require input from other bodies.*

Strategies are the approaches the campus implements in order to deliver its mission. The campus mission can be found in the Flagship 2030 vision statement: “to inspire imagination, creativity, and discovery; become a global force for expanding frontiers of knowledge; exemplify the power of diversity; promote Colorado as a global crossroads of ideas and discovery; and prepare students to realize their full potential.”

What are the main operational strategies employed by the campus to accomplish our mission? These five statements form an operational foundation:

- *Empower faculty as individual decision makers.*
- *Recruit the best students and prepare them for present and future success.*
- *Manage the delivery of teaching and research for revenue generation.*
- *Develop corporate and community partnerships for learning and research opportunities.*
- *Reward performance and excellence.*

To what extent do these strategies “encourage a culture of innovation and collaboration,” and to what extent does the current culture support their ability to do so? What influence do the external constraints in the operating environment ( e.g., by the CU System and Board of Regents, the State of Colorado, peer institutions and the market for higher education) and the University’s internal rules hinder collaboration and innovation?

**Empower Faculty:** Faculty are the human capital of the university. The quality of the faculty determines the quality of the university. Academic research, both basic and applied, is the force that propels knowledge. It is the faculty who create the research agendas and curriculums that create and transmit knowledge. This is distinctly different from firms and or governments which employ a strategy of top-down direction in leading an organization toward meeting its goals. In a university faculty decide what research to pursue and how to pursue it, how to engage and evaluate students, who to hire, reward and promote as colleagues and immediate supervisors.

Faculty empowerment creates a rich culture of innovation in teaching, research and organization of the institution; in fact the model of faculty empowerment lies behind most of the most of the world changing research and creative work of the last century. Faculty are the change agents. However, to the extent they are not empowered or rewarded or indeed overly constrained, change is muted. Given the national market place, those with the most creative ideas will move to where they are best rewarded.

**Prepare Students:** Students are the life blood of the university. The institution must recruit the best possible students and then prepare them for the challenges of a global experience. This requires providing the skills, attributes and experiences that allow the student/person with the ability to move easily and seamlessly between jobs and careers over his or her working life. Deciding what is taught, how it is best taught, and where it is taught is a vital mission of faculty individually and collectively in departments and academic units and provided to the students in terms of degrees, certificates and research programs. By their very nature, these academic units encourage collaboration and help to direct innovation. It is important to recognize here that exposure of students to a broad range of educational experiences as well as to faculty creative work and research is indispensable to developing the critical thinking abilities of students that will help them cope with dynamic change be it in the work force of life more broadly.

By organizing faculty into schools and colleges, departments, institutes and centers, the knowledge created by the faculty can be directed toward preparing students toward entering careers and preparing them for future career changes. In addition, colleges and departments develop the collaboration that structures degree programs in a sufficiently broad context (e.g. “liberal education”) for student success.

Innovation in the teaching arena can be hindered by rules and structures that place academic units in an adversarial relationship rather than a collaborative one. Development and delivery of new programs and degrees, cross department initiatives, collaborative teaching, and the role of new technologies in the delivery of new modalities such as online instruction and MOOCs are all examples of important instructional innovations. How these endeavors are measured and rewarded determines the extent to which such activities are deployed and implemented. Multiple layers of administrative and bureaucratic structure can lead to institutional resistance to change and stifle such innovation. The trick is to provide structure for success without stifling innovation.

**Manage Revenue Generation:** In earlier times, students paid individual professors. Income depended on having a sufficient number of students each year. Reputation mattered. Later, universities were funded primarily by either public funding or through private endowments; no longer. In order to fulfill its mission, a university like CU Boulder must generate revenue as it carries out that mission. State funding and private gifts each provide only about 4 percent of CU’s total funding, so we are dependent on the revenues gained from teaching and research to stay in business. The basic model of the tuition-driven university requires innovation and collaboration to succeed in this market place. It also requires decisions regarding the ‘correct’ size of the student body. This means not only how many students, but the source of students (non-resident and international sources) and what those students end up studying (for example, high cost programs like the STEM disciplines vs. lower cost programs). More students generate more revenue but also more direct and indirect costs (e.g., a diminution of teaching excellence through ever larger classes greater use of contingent faculty). Care must also be taken to maintain a quality driven bottom line rather than an exclusive focus on revenue streams. There must be a perception of excellence to for CU to succeed while we manage the overall cost of attendance.

**Create Partnerships:** In addition to leveraging our knowledge creation in managing revenues, CU is leveraging Boulder’s and Colorado’s other unique assets to enhance both teaching and research

activities. Colorado as a state is one of the most highly educated in the nation. The Boulder community in particular is rated among the most innovative in terms of the number of start-up companies, venture capital funding, and community culture. Developing and maintaining corporate and community partnerships with these entities can provide experiential learning opportunities to students and unique research opportunities for faculty. Included among these partnerships is the opportunity for lifetime engagement with members of the CU community.

**Reward Performance and Excellence:** To try to close the circle between empowering faculty and managing resources, a university like CU must employ mechanisms that link revenue management to individual activity. At CU Boulder we employ strategies to reward performance and excellence, for instance a tenure and promotion system and individual salary increments based on meritorious performance. But productivity and efficiency must be effectively rewarded as well, but in balance with innovation, quality, excellence and responsiveness to mission.

Russ Moore

Bill Kaempfer

Faculty Team: Ann Carlos, Andy Cowell, Page Moreau

Administrative Team: Ryan Chreist, Larry Levine, Steve Thweatt

Advisory Council: Norm Augustine, Bill Reinert, Phil Washington