



November 8, 2023

To: Michelle Marks (Chancellor), Constancio Nakuma (Provost), and Ann Sherman (EVC Finance and Administration)

From: Sasha Breger Bush, Chair of Faculty Assembly

CC: Tammy Hassan and Ingrid Summers, Staff Council co-chairs

Re: Staff Council's August 2023 letter expressing concerns about budget cuts and staffing

Dear Chancellor Marks, Provost Nakuma, and EVC Sherman,

As an equity-serving institution, CU Denver has a special obligation to provide high-quality student services, including advising, financial aid counseling, and disability and mental health services, to its diverse student body. As faculty, we understand all too well how financial insecurity, stress, anxiety, and depression, among other challenges our students regularly face, can undermine their wellbeing and academic success. In the regular course of our duties, faculty work with dedicated and compassionate staff across campus to help students manage, mitigate, and cope with these constraints, obstacles, and risks.

It is in this spirit—of the joint obligation of faculty and staff to our students and one another—that we write to you to convey our support for Staff Council's recent efforts to raise awareness about how the budget realignment is impacting staff on campus. In Staff Council's letter to Chancellor Marks dated August 17, 2023, they expressed deep concerns about how several years of budget cuts have resulted in vacant staff positions, shifting and growing workloads among staff members who remain, and stress and “burnout” among staff. Faculty have similar concerns about the impact of budget cuts, and the frustration and anxiety apparent in Staff Council's comments echo many of our own feelings and concerns.

Faculty Assembly also had an opportunity to review and discuss the Chancellor's response to Staff Council and we are very grateful for the prompt and gracious reply. We also appreciated the willingness to “work together” to “find a path forward that serves our students and employees, positions us for greater financial strength, [and] strategically prepares the university for the future”.

During our October meeting with Staff Council leadership, it became evident that both staff and faculty lack access to the institutional data necessary to precisely understand how the budget realignment is affecting staff positions and workloads. Given the urgent tenor of Staff Council's letter, as well as widely known staffing problems in offices critical for student success (e.g., the Office of Financial Aid and student mental health services), we respectfully request the

administration furnish Staff Council and FA with data that can help us work together to better understand staffing issues on campus, including in critical student services offices such as course advising, financial aid counselling, and disability and mental health services.

Thank you for your consideration, support for shared governance, and your ongoing efforts to make CU Denver a people-friendly best place to work.

Sincerely,

Sasha Breger Bush, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science

Chair, CU Denver Faculty Assembly