Five questions for Glen Gallegos and Irene Griego[1]
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The University of Colorado Board of Regents is not only elected by the people of Colorado, but the board elects its leadership annually. In June, the board elected Glen Gallegos, R-Grand Junction, representing the 3rd Congressional District, and Irene Griego, D-Lakewood, representing the 7th Congressional District, as chair and vice chair, respectively. They sat down with CU Connections to talk about the upcoming school year, the recent presidential search, diversity and more.

1. With the school year starting, what is the focus of the Board of Regents for the upcoming academic year?

Regent Glen Gallegos: Our focus is on helping and supporting President Kennedy as he transitions into the job. The board has also endorsed the idea of a strategic plan, which will have input from the entire university community, including students, faculty, staff and alumni. The plan will help us identify priorities this year and into the future and will influence everything from where budget money is spent to which programs need support and the like.

And the board will retain its strong focus on doing all we can to ensure affordability and accessibility to all university programs and campuses for all Coloradans.

Regent Irene Griego: We have a couple of primary areas of focus. We have a new president in Mark Kennedy, so getting to know him and establishing an effective working relationship is important. We're off to a good start, and we've been having productive conversations with him, particularly at our retreat in July.

We're all focused on developing a strategic plan for the university, which I talk about more in the response to a question below. It will allow us to focus on what's important across the CU system, understanding that our campuses will have things specific to them.

Additionally, developing a culture of respect at CU is really important. We have an opportunity to model the kind of civility we'd like to see in our society. Our commitment to freedom of expression and CU being a place where ideas are discussed and debated in civil ways is important.

Perhaps most important is student safety. It's critical that our students have the ability to live and learn in a safe environment that allows them to realize their full potential. The regents will be sharply focused on that area.

2. There was some controversy around Mark Kennedy's selection as president during the May open forums. What was the board's takeaway from that process and how are you working with the president now?

Regent Irene Griego: My takeaway was that it's important for us to listen to faculty, staff and students, as well as to all those who have a stake in the university's success. And the success of our president should be based in part on what is important to the university community. We also have to balance the concerns of the university community with what we as regents know the job of the president to be, which is overseeing this nearly $5 billion enterprise and keeping CU moving forward.

While there were parts of the search process that were contentious, to me that reinforces the need for a strategic plan, one where we listen to the various perspectives out there and come to consensus about what's important.

The board has been pleased with the work Mark Kennedy has done since being named. He's doing a lot of listening and learning about CU, meeting people, and engaging with constituents inside CU and across Colorado. We support his efforts.

Regent Glen Gallegos: Hiring a president is a process, and the open forums were part of that process. They gave us an opportunity to hear from many people. I also heard from many people from throughout the state who did not attend forums. My takeaway is that it uncovered areas where we have some serious gaps regarding how people are treated and respected on our campuses. The LGBTQ community, minority community, conservative students and disabled students were all advocating for respect and acceptance.

I believe Mark Kennedy's background and previous voting record may lead people to think that he might violate their rights if appointed. In reality, CU has been in existence since 1876 and has become a great university because of certain tenets that will continue, regardless of who is CU's president or campus chancellor or member of the Board of Regents. We will continue to do research because it is good for the people of the state and advancing knowledge. We will continue to practice shared governance. We will continue to advocate for DACA students and Dreamers who have a legal and moral right to our university. We need to continue working to ensure that all are welcome at CU and feel safe pursuing an education. Mark Kennedy will be a part of this effort, and we will count on him to lead the way.

President Kennedy is off to a great start in his first two months. He has met with many people, including people who voiced concerns about him. He has traveled the state to meet with constituents, met with Faculty Council, alumni, donors, chancellors, researchers and others in the university community. Additionally, he has been getting input on the strategic planning process, so things are off to a great start.

3. What will the board's involvement be in the strategic planning process and what do you see as some of the trends the plan should address?

Regent Glen Gallegos: The Board of Regents sets the direction for the president and for the entire university, so this is a top priority for the board. We are working closely with President Kennedy. We are looking forward to President Kennedy's report at the board meeting on Sept. 13. The strategic planning process will involve stakeholders across the university community, and the work of the strategic plan will determine the direction of not only CU, but will influence the direction of the state in the next five to 10 years. Topics that should be addressed include CU's accessibility and affordability for all Coloradans, how budget dollars will be spent, and quality of education, to name a few.

Regent Irene Griego: The board has articulated some of the priorities that should make their way into the plan – diversity, student success, outreach. But we will also oversee the entire process and work closely with President Kennedy to see it through.

The process will be bigger than any issues individual regents have. The priorities will reflect what's important to the entire university community. The exercise itself is valuable. We will have differences along the way, but the goal is to come to consensus about what's important and execute toward those goals.

4. How does an elected board that is divided 5-4 politically come together toward common goals?

Regent Irene Griego: If we listen to our university community and base our decisions and direction on research and data, we can take politics out of our efforts. That's one of the exciting things about strategic planning. We should base the plan on what's important to CU, not any personal politics. If we do it with our best intentions, we should be able to come together on the plan.

I also believe that the foundation of the board working together is listening to students, faculty, staff and the university community. The strategic plan should be a plan for the entire university, it should not be a regent plan. We're using it as a platform to get us where we need to go to serve our students and state.

At the end of the day, no matter our political leanings, the starting and ending point for us as regents has to be what's best for the university.

Regent Glen Gallegos: Interestingly, this board votes together on the majority of the issues during my time as a regent. I am in my second term and have been a regent for almost eight years. I have full respect for every member I have served with. The strengths and differences are what make a great citizen board. I would also say that every member I have served with has the best interests of the university and its students in mind. Being a regent is not easy and requires a huge commitment. Regents do not get a salary, it requires between 10 to 30 hours per week, working members take time off work. With the help of the president and the university community, regents have made some great decisions that have helped put CU on the list of the top public universities in the nation. The board typically does not have a hard time deciding on common goals.

Regarding the split politically, it is an inherent situation because of the way we are elected. I hope we can disagree with each other without being disagreeable or making it personal. Respect for each other is key in allowing for disagreement on issues or topics, but we should never compromise our respect for each other. As we proceed with a strategic plan, it will articulate our priorities, thus making it easier to make decisions in the best interest of the university and especially the students we serve. I also believe the better we know our role as regents, the better we can make the right decisions without micromanaging, and trusting the president and the excellent people we have on staff. I am proud to serve the CU community and the state, and proud to serve with my colleagues on the CU Board of Regents, regardless of political affiliation.

5. The board has made diversity an important area of focus. How will that manifest itself at CU?

Regent Glen Gallegos: As mentioned previously, when President Kennedy was being hired, some areas of concern were shown in terms of how people were treated and respected on all campuses. I believe the work with diversity will give us more tools for ensuring that all who attend the University of Colorado can attend in a safe environment with the goal of completing a quality education.

Regent Irene Griego: Diversity is who we are, it's an important part of our culture at CU. We reflect our society, which is a diverse, inclusive society. I see us in terms of accessing the diversity of CU to make us better. It lends multiple perspectives of events and people, and if we base our thinking on multiple perspectives, we capitalize on our strength.

We should also be working toward equity, having a faculty and staff that represents the many faces of Colorado and the nation. Our campuses should have opportunities for all students to be part of the university and access what the university offers.

We're preparing students who will venture into an increasingly diverse world. We have to prepare students to compete anywhere in the world, work anywhere, work with diverse people and groups. We want our CU students to be the best they can be. Diversity is critical to that.

My best hope is the culture of CU continues to advance the diversity and access diversity. We need to be deliberate about that and if we are, we'll become better people, broader thinkers, and a stronger university.

Veteran, newly arrived leaders tout collaboration for Rocky Mountain Showdown[3]
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CU will play Colorado State University in football Friday night in the Rocky Mountain Showdown at Broncos Stadium at Mile High. It will be their final meeting in Denver after 21 years. The series will end next year in Fort Collins, then resume for games in Boulder and Fort Collins in 2023-24.

While they are rivals on the football field, CU and CSU are partners in many academic and research endeavors. They have something else in common – a mixture of new and veteran leadership. CU President Mark Kennedy and CSU President Joyce McConnell have been on the job for two months. Chancellor Tony Frank has been at CSU for 26 years. Chancellor Phil DiStefano has been at CU Boulder for 45 years.

The leaders of the campuses and systems came together for a video that uses the occasion of the football game to celebrate partnerships between CU and CSU and to highlight the institutions' collective impact on the state.

New aerospace engineering building launches, gets VIP visits[5]

Ball Corporation contributes more than $1 million to CU Boulder[6]

College of Business partners with major sport teams to offer new sport management opportunities[7]

Transforming for impact: CU Denver's future is interdisciplinary and engaged[8]

First out-of-home gun storage map to prevent suicide[9]

Community welcomes new deans of Engineering and Applied Science and Nursing and Health Sciences[10]

After two decades, Barton leaves administrative post — and legacy — behind[11]

Goodbye, Professor Medema[12]

Five University of Colorado researchers named 2019 Boettcher Investigators[13]
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Five University of Colorado biomedical researchers are among the newest Boettcher Investigators.

This year's is the 10th class to receive research funding through the Boettcher Foundation's Webb-Waring Biomedical Research Awards program.

The awards support promising, early career scientific researchers, allowing them to establish their independent research and make it competitive for major federal and private awards. Recipients are awarded $235,000 in grant funding to sustain up to three years of biomedical research.

This year's class brings the total number of CU-based Boettcher Investigators[15] to 44, representing research awards of $10.2 million. For the first time, a UCCS researcher[16] is among the investigators.

The 2019 Class of Boettcher Investigators and their research topics are:

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

M. Cecilia Caino, Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmacology – Novel mitochondrial signaling platforms in cancer

Robert Dietz, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics – Functional recovery and reversal of impairment after ischemia in the developing brain

Neelanjan Mukherjee, Ph.D., assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular genetics – Systems biology of RNA regulatory networks

Kelly D. Sullivan, Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics – Interferon signaling in Down syndrome

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO COLORADO SPRINGS

Tara Cepon Robins, Ph.D., assistant professor of anthropology – Parasite exposure and immune system development

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Seonil Kim, Ph.D., assistant professor of biomedical sciences – Cellular mechanisms of Alzheimer's disease

NATIONAL JEWISH HEALTH

Kara J. Mould, M.D. M.P.H., assistant professor of medicine – Macrophage programing in acute lung injury

"Our 10th class of Boettcher Investigators represents Colorado's most dynamic emerging scientists who are committed to improving human health," said Katie Kramer, president and CEO of the Boettcher Foundation. "The Boettcher Foundation is honored to support them at this critical juncture in their research careers."

With the seven members of the class of 2019, some 68 Boettcher Investigators have received funding through the Webb-Waring program.

Since 2010, Boettcher Investigators from CU and other institutions have gone on to earn a collective $65 million in subsequent independent research funding. Of these award recipients, 95% remain at Colorado research institutions, advancing the foundation's mission of keeping Colorado's top scientific minds in the state.

"The Boettcher Foundation's Webb-Waring program has been an important addition to Colorado's biomedical research landscape," said Jennifer Jones Paton, president and CEO of the Colorado BioScience Association. "We see the impact the program has made over the past 10 years. We congratulate the newest class of Boettcher Investigators."

For more information about the Webb-Waring Biomedical Research Awards, visit the Boettcher Foundation website. [17]

Links

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