CU-Boulder has 100 pianos; Ted Mulcahey keeps them in tune. [1]

Ludwig on tuition waiver expansion: numbers first, then how to pay[2]

CU's tuition waiver benefit, which is being reviewed by administrators for potential changes and expansion, proved to be a focal point of discussion among members of the Faculty Council and Regent Stephen Ludwig during his appearance at the council's meeting earlier this month.

Ludwig visited the March 10 meeting at 1800 Grant St. for an open topic Q&A, during which he suggested the council work with the board to further faculty and staff goals for the benefit.

"My suggestion is, let the board help you with this," Ludwig said. "I think you'll find some support to get past the first couple of hurdles."

System administration has been working with campus leaders in recent months to establish greater consistency with the tuition waiver benefit for faculty, staff and dependents. Transferability of the benefit among campuses is a long-stated goal of faculty and staff governance groups; last month, Faculty Council was told that there hasn't been agreement[3] among the campuses regarding how that might work.

Ludwig encouraged the council to bring a request to the board asking administrators to calculate the costs of a broader benefit transferable from campus to campus.

"I think you'd get a number of (board members) to say yes to at least getting us the information," he said. "I think we need the numbers first. Then we figure out how to pay for it.

"This is an issue of political will, not money, in my estimation."

Council member David Port said faculty who have broached the subject with financial officers are told that the unknown cost impact is a major contributor to the benefit not being expanded.

"You could also say, what would it cost us not to do it?" Ludwig said. "You could make a case based on the cost of retention and recruitment. It's really expensive to recruit and replace faculty."

In other discussion, Ludwig said he's optimistic about progress being made with intercampus cooperation regarding online education at CU. He said he liked changes made by the campuses to his proposal to provide an incentive for the development of a new, fully online degree program. That initiative was announced last week[4] by campus chancellors and provosts.

In other business at the meeting, the council voted to approve revisions to two system Administrative Policy Statements: 1008[5], procedures for the establishment of centers, institutes, laboratories and bureaus; and 2006[6], retention of university records. Those two are among the 14 policies tentatively under review for potential changes taking effect on July 1[7].

Halfway through legislative session, budget decisions loom[8]

University of Colorado President Bruce D. Benson updated members of the CU Staff Council (UCSC) on a variety of issues facing the university during the council's regular meeting March 17 at 1800 Grant St. in Denver.

Benson gave an overview of the university's efforts at the legislative level to counteract expected funding reductions from the state this year and in the future. Those efforts include supporting or monitoring potential bills or ballot issues that would effectively increase money going into the state's coffers to be earmarked for education.

The state's 2017 budget shortfall means funding to CU could be reduced by as much as $5 million. Now at the halfway point in this year's session, legislators will turn their attention to the budget and an approximately $300 million deficit to determine what cuts must be made and to which programs, Benson told he group.

Colorado funding for education is one of the lowest in the nation (ranked at No. 48). Some of that is due to the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR), which limits government spending and caps state revenues. TABOR also requires Colorado to issue refunds to taxpayers when revenues are above calculated limits, even when the state is facing a huge budget deficit.

Efforts are underway to either overturn or revamp TABOR to avoid the situation the state is in now. In addition, Gov. John Hickenlooper and others are proposing that the hospital provider fee program, which helps provide health care to state residents, be converted into an enterprise fee, which would be exempt from TABOR. Those funds could then be used to ease cuts to some state programs, including education.

Benson said the university has other efforts in the works to help it be more flexible and efficient in the face of decreased state funding.

"We want to take care of our students and we want the university be efficient, but we're up against some of the worst state funding in the nation," he said.

Those efforts include a bill addressing tuition and bond rating that would allow CU and other institutions to pledge up to 100 percent of their tuition revenue to finance bonds, in effect lowering interest rates and garnering better bond ratings. CU also is interested in another bill that would change the threshold (from $2 million to $10 million or more) for capital projects that must be approved by a state development committee.

In addition, Benson:
Said the university continues to work on culture and diversity issues by developing a strong team of leaders and encouraging everyone to work together, not only within the university system but by supporting the community. Praised the campuses for their efforts to improve programs and infrastructure. He discussed the continuing evolution of CU Denver and celebrated the hiring of Chancellor Dorothy Horrell. Benson also praised CU-Boulder Athletic Director Rick George and his efforts to raise funds for the Champions Center athletic facility, which Benson said is considered the best in the country by pro scouts. He said the CU Anschutz campus will work closely with other community entities to improve mental health care. "We want to take the lead on this," Benson said. "It is a huge priority for me." He also called UCCS Chancellor Pam Shockley-Zalabak's efforts to bring a National Cybersecurity Intelligence Center to Colorado Springs important not only for the university but also the community. Noted that discussions on the university's tuition benefit are in the final phase, but reiterated that individual campus budgets are a determining factor in how those benefits can be applied.
In other business, UCSC discussed potential short-term parental and maternity leave benefits. Currently, the university does not have a specific maternity leave benefit other than the federally mandated Family and Medical Leave Act's specified 12 weeks. Parental leave – mostly used to attend children's school functions or for volunteer projects – is inconsistent across campuses. System Council has compared CU's policies with those at other universities, including Colorado State University, and will provide results to UCSC for discussion.

Council members also discussed a state law that went into effect last year that bans "use-it-or-lose-it" vacation pay policies. Council Chair Denise Thomas said she will talk with Kathy Nesbitt, vice president of employee and information services, about the law and its effect on CU's vacation policy.

Council members also continued to develop a workplace climate survey, which council hopes will illuminate employee issues that can then be turned into council action items. The survey will focus on professional development, university benefits and work satisfaction.

Spring Town Hall addresses social climate issues in forthright discussion[9]

CFO: CU costs driven by multiple factors[10]

Sparks fly at Iron Pour Performance[11]

Christopher McStay, CU School of Medicine, one of DBJ's '40 Under 40'[12]

Cascio named editor of Journal of International Business Studies[13]

Dunn to publish "Passing on the Right"[14]

Rick George leads CU's fundraising explosion[15]

Take3: How CU Denver's turning STEMs into STEAM (Video)[16]

Half of Suicidal ER Patients Aren't Asked About Access to Guns[17]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/cu-boulder-has-100-pianos-ted-mulcahey-keeps-them-tune[2] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/ludwig-tuition-waiver-expansion-numbers-first-then-how-pay[3] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/progress-tuition-waiver-benefit-expansion-continues[4] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/proposals-sought-fully-online-degree-program[5] http://www.cu.edu/ope/aps/1008[6]

http://www.cu.edu/ope/aps/2006[7] http://www.cu.edu/ope/policy/aps-under-review[8]
https://connections.cu.edu/stories/halfway-through-legislative-session-budget-decisions-loom[9]
https://connections.cu.edu/stories/spring-town-hall-addresses-social-climate-issues-forthright-discussion[10]
https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cfo-cu-costs-driven-multiple-factors[11] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/sparks-fly-iron-pour-performance[12] https://connections.cu.edu/people/christopher-mcstay-cu-school-medicine-one-dbj-s-40-under-40[13] https://connections.cu.edu/people/cascio-named-editor-journal-international-business-studies[14]
https://connections.cu.edu/people/dunn-publish-passing-right[15] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/rick-george-leads-cus-fundraising-explosion[16] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/take3-how-cu-denvers-turning-stems-steam-video[17]
https://connections.cu.edu/itn/half-suicidal-er-patients-arent-asked-about-access-guns