Five questions for Callie Rennison[1]
[2]

Voters in Colorado's 2nd District last November elected Callie Rennison, D-Superior, to represent them on the Board of Regents. She also can't help but bring another perspective to the nine-member board, that of a current faculty member at one of the university's campuses.

Rennison is a professor in the School of Public Affairs at CU Denver, where her research focuses on sexual and gender-based violence, as well as violence perpetrated against college students, women and marginalized groups. Her leadership roles have included associate dean of faculty affairs at CU Denver, and director of the Office of Equity and Title IX coordinator at CU Anschutz and CU Denver.

1. How do your experiences as a faculty member at CU Denver affect your perspective as a member of the Board of Regents?
[3]

Being a faculty member has strongly influenced my perspective on the board. There is simply no substitute for living the experiences of our faculty, and working daily with our students and staff to understand what they believe is important, and issues we'd like addressed.

An important way being faculty informs my work as a regent is to be able to share firsthand how the pandemic is affecting not only our students, but also our staff and faculty. We all have some degree of fatigue and burnout – yet we are all doing the best we can. Remembering this in our decisions is crucial.

Another important way being a faculty member informs my work on the board is that I bring an understanding and appreciation of faculty governance, which requires a collaborative relationship among regents, administrators, the president and other stakeholders in the system. Faculty governance is one way that universities differ from other institutions, and recognizing this important relationship is critical in the work the board does.

In addition, the service work I've engaged in is useful. For instance, time I've spent on committees focused on hiring, promotion and tenure allows me to share with others how these processes work.

In short, being a faculty member is invaluable, and the perspectives I bring to the board as a result of this work strengthens our board.

2. In what ways has the pandemic proved most challenging as you take on a new role as a member of the Board of Regents?
[4]

While the pandemic has been devastating in terms of lives lost, health issues and economic battering, in terms of serving as a regent, it hasn't proved to be tremendously challenging. Given the widespread use of Zoom, the board has been able to meet as needed to conduct our work. In fact, it may be that I am able to attend more meetings than I would have normally since I don't have to build in time for commuting on RTD in my day.

Another unexpected silver lining of the pandemic is that I've thoroughly enjoyed meeting others' pets on Zoom. My parrots have also enjoyed watching people in the Zoom calls and interjecting their thoughts on occasion.

Still, there are elements of being on the board during a pandemic that, while not challenging, are opportunities missed. For example, in January, the new board member swearing-in was virtual, our committee meetings are virtual and there has been no opportunity to connect in person and get to know one another. We have also been unable to tour parts of the system and meet the people doing incredible work at places like the Lyda Hill Center for Human Resilience at UCCS. That said, I recognize that in the scheme of things, these are minor and temporary inconveniences compared to losses experienced by so many.

3. What have you learned about the University of Colorado that you didn't know before you were elected to

the Board of Regents?

I did not anticipate how much I'd love learning more about all the people doing incredible work throughout the system. I have always known that there are amazing faculty and staff on all of our campuses, but I haven't had the opportunity to hear details about much of this work, especially on other campuses.

For example, as regents, we honor our university's Distinguished Professors. Without being on the board, I would not have had the opportunity to learn about these individuals and their research.

A second thing that I have learned is how much the regents do not have control over. Many issues that arise are campus-level issues, and the regents have no authority to manage them. For example, regents do not hire and fire faculty. They do grant and can revoke tenure, however. Still, hiring and firing faculty is a campus-level decision – for good reason. I recognize that many people wish the regents would address certain issues, but often, we simply do not have the authority to do so.

4. You once worked in the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics in Washington, D.C. What was the nature of your work and how were you able to draw on that experience in your teaching and research?

I loved living in Washington, D.C., and working at the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) under both the Clinton and Bush administrations. Having this real-world experience informs my approach as a professor.

One way it shows is that I focus on teaching students to be critical consumers of information. I can direct them to many original sources of data to assess claims made by others, versus accepting what they hear or read. As a professor, I work hard so students understand research methods so they can intelligently assess the claims made in research and elsewhere.

My work at BJS absolutely informs how I teach research methods and statistics. Both are taught in slightly unorthodox ways, but ways that give students the strongest skills that benefit them in the real world. For example, my graduate statistics course requires our students to develop a consulting agency name on Day One. All homework involves taking data from a fictional client, and writing a professional consulting report. The consulting report requires students to identify the research question at hand, why it's important, selecting and justifying an analytic technique to answer the question, and describing findings in a way that is understandable by people without statistical training.

Working at BJS showed me that while many people can "do" statistics, and many people can write, few can write about statistics in a way that is accessible to all. Relatedly, I established a Crime Analyst Certificate in the School of Public Affairs. This certificate is important, as I saw firsthand that developing quality research and being a critical consumer of information are skills in demand, that they offer a variety of career opportunities, and they allow students to themselves create quality research that benefits society. These sorts of skills benefit our students long after they graduate.

5. How do you enjoy spending free time?

I spend much of my free time climbing. Before it got cold, I was able to get to Eldorado Canyon more, but now my climbing happens in the gym at Boulder Rock Club. Climbing requires puzzle solving, power, finesse, technique and figuring out how I can climb a route given my own strengths and weaknesses. I love being able to get into the gym, climb hard for several hours and still have a lot of time in my day to work as a board member and a faculty member.

I also love being at home and spending time with my five parrots and husband, Dave – when he's not off somewhere climbing himself. We recently adopted a senior parrot, Chico, who is 33 years old and had been at a rescue for 22 years. He has brought a lot of joy to the flock and family.

I also enjoy sewing bags, purses and wallets. I enjoy this because it requires technical skill and allows me to acquire and use many tools and machines. There is something very attractive about engaging in an activity where there is always room for improvement.

How leadership in diversity, equity and inclusion is accelerating across the CU system[5]
[6]

New officers across the University of Colorado system are delivering an infusion of talent in the realm of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), which CU President Mark Kennedy continues to address with financial support[7] and a call to achieve long-needed progress.

At system administration, Theodosia Cook[8], the CU system's first Chief Diversity Officer, marks her first anniversary in the role this month. At the CU Anschutz Medical Campus, Regina Richards[9], Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement, took on her new role last July. At CU Denver, Antonio Farias[10] just this March was named Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. A search is underway for a new Senior Vice Chancellor for DEI at CU Boulder, while UCCS anticipates launching a search for a permanent DEI lead next month.

"Moving a university system as large and complex as CU forward in an endeavor requires strong functional leadership at both the system and campuses collaborating toward shared goals," Kennedy said. "It is exciting to see the results already achieved and in our future from the recent addition of strong DEI leaders throughout CU as we together seek to diversify students, faculty and staff; ensure that all feel they belong; and close the equity gap in our graduation rates."

The presence of higher education professionals in these roles is evidence of a shift away from the idea that DEI leadership can take place organically without the expertise of trained administrators.

"There is a popular notion that diversity is all of our work, and this can be misleading," Cook said. "We should all care, we should all resist the temptation to deny the lived experiences of historically marginalized groups and we should all raise our voices to acknowledge a more robust and accurate telling of Coloradan, American and global history.

"But we must be clear, those are the tasks that can be done by all of us, whereas DEI leadership at the nexus of organizational development and compliance requires a specialized knowledge of how to analyze and shift systems and power." Cook elaborated on the topic in this recent podcast[11].

Richards noted how she and her peers are trained to understand the principles of DEI and the complexity of compliance.

"This is a profession that requires expertise like every other profession there is," Richards said. "You wouldn't go to a heart specialist for an ear, nose and throat problem, and it's the same concept with DEI."

Farias said culture change within a community requires helping people to change their mindsets.

"That's where DEI officers come in," he said. "Our roles are to be catalysts and consultants, to help others see the big picture of why this helps everyone."

Metrics – for demonstrating progress in greater diversity among the student, faculty and staff populations, and achieving equity and inclusive communities – are crucial, leaders say.

"Everything we do is data-driven with measurable outcomes," Richards said. "We will not be supported in this work if we don't use data science to demonstrate impact in these areas."

Farias agreed that data is key.

"But at the same time, it's like most places: We're data rich and analysis poor," Farias said. "It's about taking the time to think about, what is this data really telling us? You need the right people around the room, particularly if you're talking about DEI, to look at the data from different angles."

Cook said metrics naturally vary based on the given initiative, including the DEI Innovation Fund, established last fall by President Kennedy and the CU Foundation.

“Where we are allocating funds, the metrics are about applying best practices to advance equity on our campuses,” Cook said. “Funds are being applied at the system to develop search advocates throughout the institution to create fair hiring processes that will allow for transparency, consistency and compliance.

“Right now our goal is to increase the knowledge base of those connected to hiring activities and then we hope to shift our tools to track data at every point of the hiring process. But we must first do that by building buy-in into this new model.”

Cook said she is working to gain that buy-in in part by empowering DEI leaders at the campuses, positioning them to be equipped structurally and financially to make policy recommendations, innovate around key processes – and ultimately be respected as the professionals they are.

“This will allow us to make progress,” Cook said. “Because at the beginning of my tenure, the main problem I identified was that DEI leaders were not empowered – so how could we ever make progress, if they weren’t equipped to lead it?”

Richards said she’s excited and optimistic about the campus initiatives underway[12], which took root last year after students proposed over 87 recommendations for anti-racism solutions.

“By having the support of Chancellor (Don) Elliman, by getting the resources we need, we are going to be able to lay foundational work that will have impact over time,” Richards said.

Farias looks forward to helping enact new policies that will in turn promote new work habits – and personal habits – to get on track.

“I apply my background to this role in a way that brings people together,” Farias said. “If I have any skill, it’s about collaboration and bringing disparate and usually silent groups together to work on fixing problems. With Chancellor (Michelle) Marks at the helm, this is happening across the enterprise, and she has dubbed it ‘radical inclusivity.’”

One-time payments set to arrive in July paychecks[13]
[14]

As the University of Colorado approaches the end of a fiscal year dotted with employee furloughs, CU leadership has determined the details of one-time compensation payments to faculty and staff.

The payments are being distributed in recognition of the challenges employees met during the past year’s pandemic and a new compensation cycle, the shift of which was approved last month by the Board of Regents[15].

The one-time, non-base-building payments – set to be included with the July 30 paycheck – are for this fiscal year only, and will apply to eligible faculty, research faculty and university staff employees.

Because the payment is non-base-building, it is not added to the employee’s continuing regular salary rate.

The payment covers the six-month gap between the previous July 1 merit date and the new Jan. 1 merit date. This results in a payment for the employee equivalent to 1% of their annual academic year contract or 12-month salary. The one-time payment is based on the employee’s regular salary rate as of June 30.

Not included are summer appointments or other administrative/academic appointments for academic faculty. Only the academic year, or 12-month (for faculty with 12-month appointments), base salary for faculty will be considered in the

calculation.

Details vary among the campuses and system administration. Click here[16] for more information.

At CU Boulder, temporary campuswide pay reductions will end on June 30. The one-time payment is based on the employee's regular salary rate as of June 30 after the temporary campuswide pay reduction is ended. Click here[17] for more details.

The CU Anschutz Medical Campus, where the compensation cycle is not changing calendar dates, is providing base-building increases geared toward employee retention, and salary adjustments necessary for market alignment to eligible CU Anschutz faculty, staff, PRAs and dual-campus Central Services Administration employees. Click here[18] for more details.

To be eligible for the one-time payments, employees must be regular faculty, research faculty or university staff who have an active appointment as of July 1, 2021, and who also meet the conditions below. Temporary employees are not eligible.
Regular faculty and university staff who received a "meeting expectations" or higher performance rating during the 2020-2021 performance management cycle. **Research faculty** who held active appointments as of Jan. 31, 2021. (Due to the timing of the performance evaluation cycle, research faculty generally will not have performance scores on file by July 2021.)
As approved by the Colorado Legislature, **classified staff employees** will receive a 3% across-the-board, base-building merit increase effective July 1, 2021, instead of the one-time, non-base-building payment.

The one-time payment will be funded and directly charged to central campus sources, which were made available because of federal pandemic relief funding. One-time payments made to eligible employees funded from gifts, grants, contracts or auxiliary funds also will be directly charged to these central campus sources.

Administration has yet to determine whether a base-building merit pool will be feasible for compensation increases that would take effect Jan. 1, 2022. The decision will be made in early October after enrollment censuses are complete.

Make your health plan selections by Friday[19]
[20]

The deadline for faculty and staff to make updates to benefits plans and re-enroll in flexible savings accounts (FSAs) is approaching fast. All Open Enrollment health care elections for the 2021-22 plan year must be submitted in the employee portal[21] by 5 p.m. Friday.

If you are happy with your current health coverage, you don't need to take action for current coverage to remain the same. There's one exception: If you are enrolled in a Flexible Spending Account and plan to continue using it, you must re-enroll for the 2021-22 plan year.

Take these steps to assess your health care needs and gather all the information needed to make coverage decisions. Find plan details, informational videos, FAQs, brochures and more by visiting the Open Enrollment homepage[22]. Review the What's New page[23] to see a summary of changes for the next plan year. Some key changes to CU's health plans include an increase in monthly premiums[24] and out-of-pocket limits for most plans, an expansion of care options through Kaiser with added medical centers and urgent care services, expansion of specific dental services in all Delta Dental plans and more. Watch CU's two digital courses: Open Enrollment Overview[25] and Basics of CU's Health Plans and Pretax Savings[26]. These courses are available in English and Spanish. Finally, once you've gathered all the needed information on CU's plan options, the How to Enroll guide[27] can help you navigate signing up.
After taking time for your benefits, enroll in digital delivery

Each year, the university is legally required to mail all CU Health Plan enrollees a large packet of benefits notices. However, you can opt to receive these notices electronically via email. We'll deliver them to your email inbox and store them conveniently in the portal where you can access them any time – saving time, paper and mailing costs.

See sign-up instructions.[28]

Tuition Assistance Benefit applications now open for summer 2021[29]
[30]

Consider summer school an opportunity for growth. The Tuition Assistance Benefit application window is now open for the summer 2021 semester in the employee portal[21].

Qualified employees can save on up to nine credits per academic year (fall through summer) on any CU campus, and their children, spouses and other dependents have several options to save on tuition costs. Dependent options[31] vary based on whether classes are taken on the employee's campus of employment.

See full policies, deadlines and instructions on the Tuition Assistance Benefit web page[32].

Submit your application, either for yourself or on your dependent's behalf, by the application deadlines for your campus of attendance:
CU Boulder: May 31[33]CU Denver and CU Anschutz:[34] May 17 for Maymester June 15 for Summer CU Colorado Springs: June 21[35]
Employees must submit a Tuition Assistance Benefit application on behalf of their dependent. See the links below for full details on campus application deadlines and processes:

Apply now
Log into the employee portal[21] Open the CU Resources dropdown menu, and select **Forms** Click the **Career Advancement** tile, then click the **Tuition Assistance Application** tile
Fall 2021 semester policy changes

Starting with the fall semester, employees can register seven days prior to the first day of the semester or the first day of class, whichever is earlier. Learn more about what this change means in the recent CU Connections story[36]. This change does not apply to summer 2021 registration.

Confronting COVID-19 with AAU research, like better air filtration in schools[37]

Boulder Faculty Assembly votes to censure President Kennedy[38]

Silva-Smith's work reflects modern nursing values[39]

Why I got vaccinated[40]

Newly named Ludeman Family Center for Women's Health Research begins next chapter [41]

Kennedy, Brown set for Conference on World Affairs virtual discussion [42]

Barboza named associate editor of journal for Child Maltreatment [43]

Brown has finger on the pulse of Center for Health, Work and Environment [44]

Signing of services agreements, term sheets advances CU Online[45]
[46]

The CU Online initiative took a significant step forward with the recent signing of the main services agreements between all four campuses and the Office of Digital Education (ODE), along with term sheets for specific programs that are contracting for enhanced services.

The main services agreement between the campuses and ODE details the services ODE will provide. Enhanced services include market intelligence, marketing, recruitment, student support, and course design and development.

"Reaching these agreements was a great collaborative effort among campus academic programs and ODE that will allow us to proceed in a strategic way to leverage the success of our offerings by drawing on the substantial expertise of ODE," said CU President Mark Kennedy. "It's a crowded and competitive market for online programming and it's important for CU to give itself every opportunity to succeed, and these agreements are a step in the right direction."

Additionally, two separate standard services agreements between CU Anschutz and CU Denver were signed. ODE will continue to support eight CU Anschutz online programs and eight certificate programs now featured on the CU Online Website. ODE also will continue to support 22 of the CU Denver online programs and 12 of its online certificate programs.

Term sheet agreement for enhanced services have been signed for the following programs:
MBA (Denver) MS in Information Systems (Denver) MS in Management (Denver) MS in Marketing (Denver) MS in Accounting (Denver) BS in Applied Computer Science – Post Baccalaureate (Boulder) RN to BSN (UCCS)
There are several additional potential enhanced service programs in the pipeline for spring 2022 that are scheduled to be announced in the summer.

CU salutes Benson Society members for their transformational giving[47]

[48]

The challenges of the last year haven't dampened CU donors' vision and generosity for the university. They continued to invest their gifts in their passions across CU's four campuses – including supporting student scholarships, groundbreaking research and life-saving health care.

CU on April 29 celebrated that dedication during the Benson Society Gala, a virtual event with CU leadership and notable alumni. The annual gathering thanks members of the Benson Society, the university's top donor giving society.
[49]

Alumnus and former CU Buffs star running back Phillip Lindsay served as the evening's emcee. He talked about his story of success as a CU graduate and student-athlete.

"You have made that journey possible," Lindsay told donors. "And not just my journey. But for countless others – students, faculty, researchers, health care workers, patients and more. This is all possible because of your generosity that changes lives. I know because you changed mine."

CU President Mark Kennedy and first lady Debbie Kennedy also thanked guests for their transformational giving across CU.

"Together, you ensure that our students are successful, and that we remain steadfastly focused on strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion across our campuses," President Kennedy told members. "You guarantee that CU researchers possess the means to unearth discovery, and that we'll continue to make breakthroughs in health care and medicine."

Benson Society members have given or committed at least $1 million in gifts to support CU. Established in 2017, it's named for former CU President Bruce Benson and first lady Marcy Benson for prioritizing philanthropy at CU. Last year, 25 donors joined the Benson Society, bringing its membership to nearly 400.

The gala also featured FACE Vocal Band, an a cappella group whose founding members met at CU Boulder, and four short videos that show giving's impact on each of CU's campuses.

Tenille Townes, the Academy of Country Music's 2019 New Female Artist of the Year, performed hits from her latest album to conclude the evening.

Learn more about the Benson Society at giving.cu.edu/benson-society[50].

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/five-questions-callie-rennison[2]
https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/rennison_top.jpg[3]
https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/rennison_01.jpg[4]
https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/rennison_02.jpg[5] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/how-leadership-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-accelerating-across-cu-system[6]
https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/dei_top_1.jpg[7] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/dei-innovation-fund-will-augment-campuses-system-diversity-efforts[8] https://president.cu.edu/university-leadership/theodosia-cook[9]
https://www.cuanschutz.edu/about/leadership/associate-vc-diversity-equity-inclusion-community-engagement[10]
https://www1.ucdenver.edu/about/leadership/cu-denver-leadership/vice-chancellors/diversity[11]
http://cuontheair.blubrry.net/2021/04/28/building-cus-strength-through-diversity/[12]
https://www.cuanschutz.edu/offices/diversity-equity-inclusion-community/strategic_direction[13]

https://connections.cu.edu/stories/one-time-payments-set-arrive-july-paychecks[14]
https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/onetimebonus_top.jpg[15] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/regents-set-tuition-rates-2021-22[16] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/merit-faqs[17]
https://www.colorado.edu/hr/2021/05/05/one-time-non-base-building-payment[18]
https://www.cuanschutz.edu/about/leadership/chancellor/communiques/updates-to-compensation-tuition[19]
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https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/open-enrollment/sessions[26] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/benefits-wellness/basics-cu-health-plans-and-pretax-savings[27] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/open-enrollment/how-enroll[28] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/benefits-wellness/digital-delivery[29]
https://connections.cu.edu/stories/tuition-assistance-benefit-applications-now-open-summer-2021[30]
https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/tuition-summer_top.jpg[31] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/benefits-wellness/current-employee/tuition-assistance/dependent-options[32] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/benefits-wellness/current-employee/tuition-assistance[33] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/benefits-wellness/current-employee/tuition-assistance/cu-boulder[34] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/benefits-wellness/current-employee/tuition-assistance/cu-denveranschutz[35] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/benefits-wellness/current-employee/tuition-assistance/uccs[36] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/tuition-assistance-benefit-policy-update-allows-earlier-registration[37] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/confronting-covid-19-aau-research-better-air-filtration-schools[38] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/boulder-faculty-assembly-votes-censure-president-kennedy[39]
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