

October 29, 2020

Dear Chancellor Haefner and Provost Clark,

I am writing as the Faculty Director of the Colorado Women's College Leadership Scholars Program to express my program's response to the decision regarding keeping the university's pioneer moniker. While the students in the program can and certainly are speaking for themselves on this matter, I felt it important to also add my voice to profess their and my concerns about the subject.

First off, I want to restate how much the CWC Leadership Scholars Program values the support and interaction of both of you as senior leaders of our institution. The students have directly expressed appreciation for the time you've both spent with them to understand their experiences at the institution as first generation students, womxn of color, and queer womxn. Chancellor Haefner, you've met with us twice and both meetings were experiences of co-learning and understanding across different roles and perspectives. Provost Clark, your visit to the first and second years was a highlight of the quarter and the women expressed deep thanks for the time you took hearing their stories. Leadership that hears the voices of the least represented is a powerful statement and your presence with these students made a strong impact.

With that relationship established, it is with great care and concern that I relay the dissent expressed by my students regarding the decision to accept and embrace the positive aspects of the pioneer moniker. In all of my classes this week, the scholars have shared that they feel highlighting the positive elements of the pioneer meaning does not wipe away the deeply trauma-filled elements of the word for Indigenous members of our community. We have very few Indigenous students on our campus and only two of our CWC Leadership Scholars directly identify as Indigenous. I offer you the words of one of these scholars – a first-year student – who stated through tears in class on Monday,

*"I thought the university would be more supportive with Indigenous students... me being an Indigenous person, and I thought maybe he would consider changing pioneer and he didn't. So I'm kind of having a tough time with that, especially with being in the [Indigenous students]club. We all were actually crying about it that it's been a four-year fight and we're still fighting that right now because of his response."*

I am certain you have heard many such responses – but I wanted to capture and share this one voice, who is a bright ball of energy and light in our program and at our institution. She and many of the other scholars face daily challenges of not feeling fully part of the University of Denver community. I wanted to share with you her words and that her reaction to this decision furthers her disappointment in the institution and her sense of feeling unwelcome.

As an educator and advocate for the CWC Leadership Scholars program, I share this story to make you both aware of the direct needs of the students in this moment. As senior leaders

you've taken time out of your busy schedules to engage with these students. Now, hearing how this decision has negatively impacted their experience at DU, how will you support them moving forward?

I was heartened and excited to see the plans addressing many of the students' requests, including hiring more faculty of color and supporting the experience of black students on campus. As a former college administrator, I know it is difficult to find solutions that appease and please all constituents. I also believe this particular topic will not be resolved simply by decree. I am hopeful we can continue these difficult conversations with purpose, in community, and with a hopeful vision for the equitable future of the University of Denver.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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