



University of Colorado

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Bruce D. Benson
President

April 1, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Philip DiStefano, Chancellor University of Colorado at Boulder

FROM: Bruce D. Benson, President 

SUBJECT: SJMC Program Discontinuance

Chancellor DiStefano – Thank you for the work you, your administrative team and the faculty, staff and students have done on the proposed discontinuance of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. I appreciate the thoughtful consideration given to this important issue.

I have reviewed all the related documents, including the Advisory Board recommendation, the Program Discontinuance Report, the Journalism Plus Action Plan, the ICT Report and the school's recent accreditation report. In addition to numerous conversations with you, as part of my due diligence I have also spoken personally with faculty, students, alumni, donors, representatives of the Colorado Press Association, employers, and several prominent members of the media. I talked with members of my leadership team, including one with expertise in academic matters and another with experience as a working journalist, who is an alumnus of our program.

This review leads me to the conclusion that I support the campus recommendation for program discontinuance. I also believe CU-Boulder should continue to offer a bachelor's degree with a double major in journalism and another academic discipline. We should develop the Journalism Plus program and restructured MA program to meet the criteria for accreditation from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Journalism education at CU has a rich history, strong demand, a successful track record (with student recruitment, graduation rates, internships and alumni employment) and meets a significant need in our state and nation. Additionally, journalism plays a substantial role in a democratic society, a factor that should guide our thinking going forward.

While technology is driving rapid change in the field, journalism's fundamental values of fairness, balance, accuracy, ethics and law remain. Any program we offer should promote those values, regardless of administrative structure. What is more, given the rapid pace of change in the ways media present information, there is a significant need for research to help society and the industry effectively move forward in the digital age. A university such as ours is uniquely suited to contribute to that body of research.

We owe it to current and prospective students, their parents, employers, and faculty and staff to provide a clear path going forward. The committee recommendations have the basis for that way forward. However, given the proposed changes to the program's administrative structure, I have questions I would like you to address before I make a recommendation to the Board of Regents.

- Will a new administrative structure adequately address concerns raised in the recent accreditation report (particularly regarding the graduate program)?
- Can the requirements of the proposed double major be completed in 120 hours?
- Will the new program have appropriate advising and course offerings to allow students to finish their degrees in a timely way?
- How does the campus intend to communicate with current and potential students during the transition from the current structure to the new structure to ensure continuity and robust enrollment?
- Will the proposal to offer the graduate program under the auspices of Continuing Education ensure a bridge to a stable funding model?
- Does the plan ensure a long-term home for Journalism at CU, whether the ICT proposal proceeds or not?
- How do you intend to engage faculty, students, professional associations and media leaders in discussions regarding the long-term future of the program?

I would like the campus to proceed quickly toward solidifying a permanent administrative structure and academic home for CU's Journalism program, placing particular emphasis on the budget implications. Thank you again for your work. We share the common goal of strengthening Journalism education at CU and graduating students who contribute to the critical role the discipline plays in a democratic society.