March 5, 2014

To the CSU-Pueblo Campus Community:

As chair of the Colorado State University System Board of Governors, it was my pleasure to visit campus last Friday and meet with a number of faculty, staff, and students. The passion, dedication and concern for the University and its students came through strongly in the various conversations. Not surprisingly, it was also evident that the current budget situation has created a good deal of uncertainty and worry about the future. But great institutions are defined by the way they respond to adversity. Those that band together to rise above challenges come through the crucible stronger, more resilient, and with greater confidence. CSU-Pueblo is going through just such a defining time. The way this campus responds to the current fiscal challenges ultimately will shape the future of this historic University, which has been improving lives through education and enhancing the Pueblo community for more than 80 years.

I speak for the entire CSU System Board of Governors when I say that we are committed to standing with CSU-Pueblo and supporting the University through this difficult period. We believe the role and mission of CSU-Pueblo as a comprehensive regional University with an HSI designation is essential to Colorado’s educational landscape. The goal of assuring a healthy and vibrant future for CSU-Pueblo is shared by the Board of Governors, Chancellor Mike Martin, CSU System staff, your administration, and colleagues at your sister institutions. For all those reasons, the board recently took the extraordinary step of investing $5 million to help the campus avoid immediate and painful mid-year cuts due to a drop in operating revenue linked to a decline in enrollment last fall. This investment is intended to serve as a bridge to give the University’s leadership time to implement a longer-term plan for better aligning expenses with revenues. The board strongly endorses the budget-reduction plan presented by President Lesley Di Mare and her leadership team, and we recognize and appreciate the significant work that has gone into helping craft that plan by faculty, staff, and students through the University Budget Board. The plan represents a shared sense of sacrifice while attempting to preserve and protect core academic programs and services essential to carrying out your mission.

The Board of Governors will be closely monitoring the financial situation at CSU-Pueblo over the coming weeks and months. Later this spring, when we all have a better sense of what will
happen with fall enrollment, we will take another look at the budget for the next fiscal year. If the outlook improves, we will work with President Di Mare to ensure resources are invested in a manner that puts the University on a trajectory toward financial stability. Further declines in enrollment, however, could lead to additional budget reductions.

I applaud the efforts that are underway to focus on the recruitment of new students and retention of current students. Each one of you is an ambassador for CSU-Pueblo, and I strongly encourage everyone on campus to actively participate and support those efforts. Meanwhile, the Board of Governors will be considering steps that could leverage capacities within the broader CSU System. At our February meeting, the board charged all three CSU System institutions to collaborate in identifying potential economies of scale and ways to maximize the strengths of each campus. We will review a preliminary report in June, and, over time, we believe this initiative can deliver measurable benefit to all three universities.

CSU-Pueblo is not alone. A clear majority of Colorado’s colleges and universities are experiencing declines in resident enrollment as the state continues to recover from the recession, and no institution is immune from financial struggles. What will define CSU-Pueblo is the way we all respond to this moment and the set of challenges that are before us. To succeed in working through these current challenges, we need to seek common ground and resist making personal attacks and using language that divides us or that needlessly fans the flames of fear during this critical time. I’d also ask that members of the campus community work constructively within the well-established shared governance framework to address concerns and issues so that all voices and viewpoints may be heard and respected. We must find ways to bring out the best in each other and seize the opportunities that exist, not just for our own benefit but, most especially, for the students and the region we are privileged to serve.

During my recent as well as previous visits to campus, I have encountered a community of wonderfully bright, creative individuals who, every day, are making meaningful contributions to CSU-Pueblo. I have great confidence that by harnessing your passion and talent, by working together and by keeping a shared long-term focus, the university can and will overcome its current challenges. I wish you all the best in moving toward a future for CSU-Pueblo that is even brighter than its past.

Warmest regards,

Dorothy Horrell
Chair of the CSU System Board of Governors