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2020 – 2021 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Campaign

Policy and Platform Document

Spring 2020

Preface:

It is imperative to consider that many of the issues outlined below are intersectional and likely will not operate and/or be fixed independently of each other.

Objective:

The objective of this document is to specifically identify key areas that could and/or are current areas of concern at the University of Denver. This document does not outline all issues and is subject to revision at any time.

Strategy:

We recognize that the University of Denver is a small liberal arts institution that maintains its own governance and operational structure. With that in mind, we recognize that we cannot unilaterally change policy or achieve any ends by simply demanding change. Our implementation strategy encourages building healthy relationships with student leadership, faculty/staff leadership, University leadership, and the Board of Trustees to usher and inform the best change. In the spirit of higher education and intellectual prowess, we intend to use qualitative, quantitative, and empirical evidence to legitimize all of our actions and policy recommendation to both the students—our constituents—and University leadership.

Student Engagement:

One of the most essential functions The Undergraduate Student Government's role is to provide the unwavering support for student organizations. Below are some specific policies and actions we plan to adopt to better support DU's student organizations.

1. 'Launch' Peer Advisors – this would be a dedicated paid role that would support student organizations with the start up process (i.g. constitutions and bi-laws), help student organizations navigate funding processes, and help connect on campus organizations to do joint programming.
2. We recognized that leading a student organization is a very large undertaking and can often leave new leaders feeling helpless. With that being said, we plan to develop a comprehensive student leadership and organization development workshops that will give student leaders the tools and connections they need to succeed.
3. To bolster student voice/representation and engender USG accountability, we plan to assign Senators to be liaisons with student organizations. We will expect that Senators will make a point to visit student organization meetings at least once a quarter. Hopefully, Senators will get invaluable student input to direct USG and University policy.
4. We will push for more intersectionality between the classroom and student organization events. Many of our organizations put on great events; we will encourage faculty to sponsor/advertise attending those events for possible credit.
5. Community Involvement- this would bolster school pride and spirit. We want to open intermission/halftime events or games of the student body's choice, work with different entities on campus such as Lamont School and Open Mic Night to promote student concerts and events around campus. We want student organizations, like DU's acapella groups, to perform the national anthem at large events.

We also understand that student engagement does not just come from student organizations. As we start to shape and mold the future of the University of Denver, we need to engage students in that process. We plan to make a point of including students in the "4D" model development by recommending the Chancellor consider student subcommittees.

We also recognize that not all student engagement comes from student organizations. We will push for more free school-sponsored student engagement such as concerts, civic projects, athletics participation, spirit and traditions, and cultural events.

Diversity and Inclusive Excellence

We agree that diversity and inclusive excellence is one of the most important areas for us to focus on for the following year. We also agree that it is very often an overlooked element of our community. In short, if we do not level the playing field for all, not everyone can enter the arena. In the following year, we plan to specifically address:

1. Bringing the demands of current students to University administration and advocating for their swift implementation.
2. Encourage administration to invite student affinity groups to admission events.
3. Encourage administration to include more student voices on search committees.
4. Continued focus on student voice and intellectual freedom. We need to be sure that ALL students feel that they can express their voice and feel free some persecution or ridicule.
5. We will advocate for greater sensitivity to religious/spiritual holidays on campus. We are aware that many times, landmark days, like the first day of classes, have been scheduled on major religious holidays.
6. We demand aggressive education and outreach programs to better educate our students on topics of micro-aggressions against others. Without this effort, our students will not feel safe and accepted in our community.

Sustainability and the Environment

Our environment is an asset that extends way beyond the realm of the University of Denver. As a private university dedicated to the public good, we must take all the steps we can to fulfill that commitment. The greatest commitment we can make to the world is being stewards of responsible action. We plan to work directly with the Center for Sustainability to ensure that DU continues to focus on the most up to date sustainability practices.

Some action items we plant to focus on the coming year include:

1. DU needs to reach carbon neutrality before 2030 to be in accordance with the International Panel on Climate Change; however, without the push of student government, DU administration will not meet that requirement. We were able to secure a commitment to pushing up carbon neutrality from 2050 to 2030. In the coming year, we plan to push that agenda to ensure that DU remains loyal to its commitment
2. DU needs to divest from fossil fuels in order to help create a better environment for all. For many years' students have been advocating for DU to divest from fossil fuels. All those attempts have fallen on mute ears. This year we tried again, with a similar result. We remain committed to pushing and advancing the legitimacy of this cause in the coming year/s.
3. This past year we championed a resolution that directed the RTD Fee to re-brand to a "Mobility Fee," enhancing fiscal responsibility, equally servicing more students, and improving mobility solutions around campus that are more accessible to all and encourage sustainable travel.
4. Ensuring the new dining hall and resident hall maintain the best sustainability practices. We are concerned that with the grab-and-go model, there could be excessive waste. We will encourage the adoption of reusable containers to limit packaging waste.
5. We also understand that sustainability goes beyond physical changes to campus structures and operations. We will promote sustainability education for student's day-to-day lives so they can leave DU with the tools to live a responsible life. We are also mindful of topics such as food insecurity for on and off-campus students and plan to arm students with the tools to be the most successful they can be.

6. We also encourage the implementation of sustainable academic practices such as book recycling. What does this mean? Many courses use the same books quarter after quarter, so why are we always buying new books. We encourage book swaps and book trade centers that one, reduce costs for students, and two reduces the printing and waste of books.

Student Safety, Security, and Wellness

Our highest priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students at the University of Denver. If students do not feel as though they are safe, healthy, and comfortable at DU, we cannot ever expect them to flourish on our campus. We recognize that without the brave efforts of the WeCanDUBetter movement, many voices and traumatic experiences of DU students would have never been heard—it has been too long. We remain steadfast in affirming and supporting all of the efforts of the WeCanDUBetter movement and doing everything we can over the next year to improve the lives, safety, and comfort of DU students. With that being said, we have identified some major areas to focus on student safety, health, and wellness:

1. We demand the introduction of student advisor to Campus Safety, ideally from CAPE/CCGVT/Peer Support, to advise on topics of gender violence, sexual assault, hate crimes, and discrimination, etc. We think it is essential that Campus Safety remains in touch with the experiences and perspectives of students. If Campus Safety does not understand the experience of students, they are unable to do their job effectively.
2. We demand aggressive education and outreach programs to better educate our students on bystander awareness, supporting victims of GV/SA and better education on resources available to DU students.
3. We need to focus on the Office of Title IX. Many survivors report unpleasant and insensitive experiences while reporting cases of GV/SA. We need to make sure survivors feel comfortable and supported when reporting cases of GV/SA.
4. We demand the implementation of a support officer be present on every shift of every day so to ensure that our campus first responders are doing their best to support survivors of SA/GV. To the same tune, we call for females and officers of color to be hired to serve our community better.
5. We demand an external review be conducted of Campus Safety to ensure their policy meets best practices in the field of being trauma-informed and supporting survivors of GV/SA.
6. Let's use student programs such as DU EMS as student advocates. DU EMS can not only support students who have experienced trauma but also a friendly face to make sure students feel safe getting home. DU EMS could offer a safe walk/safe ride program that could pick up students that do not feel safe walking home.

7. We call for lighting and blue light phones to be present on campus to ensure that those students feel as safe as possible when on campus.
8. We encourage Greek life to adopt policies that support their members and make all students feel safe while at their events. Some of those include: guest lists for events, TIPS trained bartenders, sober monitors at events, and education for all members on support resources i.e CAPE, SOS, Blue Bench, etc. (We recognize that many organizations are already doing some of these things).
9. We demand a review of the amnesty policy. While one exists, practice and policy do not align. We need to ensure that our students feel as though they can call for help for a peer in need, without them being concerned about the negative outcomes for themselves or another.
10. We request that the university investigates installing motion detectors and better lighting outside resident halls and off-campus university-owned housing to protect students.
11. We demand that RA's have their job role/duties reviewed. RA's into a putative system that does not allow them to support students or be a safe person to approach.
12. We demand a review of our inclement weather policy. The current paradigm of the University of Denver is that we are an "on-campus school," but many of us can agree, that is simply not true. Many students, often commuter, off-campus, and students with disabilities, are often forced to decide between their safety and their grades. We demand that we look at an inclement weather policy that accommodates students that cannot get to campus safely. Some adaptations may include remote testing, remote access to class, etc. We know this is possible, given the recent adjustments for the COVID-19 crisis.
13. We demand the Chaplains role be fulfilled as faith/spirituality and essential party many students' mental wellbeing.
14. We demand more mental health professionals be hired so we students do not have to wait for weeks to get mental health support.
15. We encourage the HCC to have more student run support meetings and promote their resources.
16. We encourage campus groups to work with recovery centers and the HCC to offer addiction and substance abuse support to their membership.

Student Costs and Fees:

Who is not concerned or struggle with the costs of attendance; short answer, nobody! University of Denver students and/or their families bear an immense financial burden to support the cost of attendance at the University of Denver. According to the University of Denver's Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, tuition, fees, and board has risen for the past 10 years at a rate of 3-5 percent annually. In 2010 the cost of tuition, fees, and board was \$52,670 (adjusted to inflation) in comparison to the 2020 cost of tuition, fees, and board, which is \$65,952. We also recognize that tuition increases disproportionally affect economically disadvantaged students of the University of Denver, and the cost of attendance could undoubtedly be a motivating factor in one's decision to not study at the University of Denver. Finally, we recognize there are many other costs of attending the University of Denver, which include, but are not limited to, books, supplies, health and wellness, transportation, and food. With that being said, we have identified several major areas to improve costs for DU Students.

1. DU is a very expensive institution, often more so than comparable institutions. As tuition continues to rise and DU becomes less affordable, we agreed that DU should implement a tuition freeze so students and their families can keep their heads above water and are able to plan for their financial success. While we were not entirely successful, we were able to secure the lowest tuition increase in the last 40 years (2.5% as opposed to 4.5-5% in previous years). We remain committed to pushing this agenda in the coming year/s.
2. We encourage that DU provides open-source education resources so that all students have equal access to education.
3. Who has not paid for a \$300 textbook, nobody! As mentioned earlier, we need to look at book recycling and swap programs that do not force students to continue to buy books that they use for 10 weeks.
4. Remember that one quarter of free printing that went away! Let's bring it back! We know that some majors require much more printing than others. Our recommendation is that all majors provide an expected printing volume to IT so that we can budget appropriately.
5. Wonder where that student activities fee goes, don't we all! We remain committed to ensuring that every penny a student pays to go to DU ends-up back in their pocket.

Other Important Issues:

2020 Presidential Election:

This upcoming year is a Presidential Election year. There are countless stories of traumatic, disturbing, and violent experiences of DU students living in and grappling with Presidential Elections on this campus.

We weigh in by saying, it comes down to the fact that we are very concerned about safety and respect. We recognize that we have a particular "lens" or perspective, like many others on the campus, but our role is to make sure that everyone feels safe, welcome, and supported by DU. We know that the election of a particular candidate can be scary, induce anxieties, and cause a lot of turbulence for many students. So, with that in mind, our job is not to weigh in on the race per-se, but to weigh in/listen to what students need or want. Our job is to provide stability and make this a campus for everyone. No matter what happens, we/DU is committed to making sure that you feel safe and welcome at your DU home.

COVID-19:

There are so many uncertainties and anxieties that surround the COVID-19 pandemic for DU students. Some of the questions we will be answering are:

What does another quarter online look like?

What are we going to do about study abroad?

How are we going to make sure that everyone feels safe coming back to campus?

How will we inform the best health practices when we come back?

While we do not have all the answers to those questions yet, seeing as time will likely answer many of them, we do remain committed to ensuring that those questions are at the forefront of the administration's mind.

The Mascot and Pioneer:

We are very aware that addressing the memory and legacy of the Pioneer is a major unanswered question at the University of Denver. We are aware that the Pioneer can be a very traumatic and painful experience for many members of our community. Thus, we say, we need to focus less on answering what the mascot will/should be, but to answer how we remember the pain of Pioneer. We say, DU should put its money where its mouth is, and we should focus on what we stole from Native Americans. We stand by native students and future students and say that DU should be standing up to long legacies of institutional and structural oppression. Part of the answer seems simple; we should provide free tuition to all native students—its reparations.

With regard to the mascot, we need to develop a committee dedicated to answering the question of the mascot. We agree that the mascot is very important in addressing the gaping hole of school spirit. With that being said, it is going to take time, student voice, and deliberate thought to answer that question in a meaningful way.