

STATEMENT OF DR CHRIS GILMER

As most of you know, I, Adams State University's Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chris Gilmer, care deeply about the future of our local community, Adams State University, and the San Luis Valley.

In recent years, our school and its faculty and administration have come under scrutiny by outside parties, and many of their accusations are undeserved. Admittedly, Adams State University has faced and still faces some very real issues, and you have heard me speak openly about those issues while the president and the entire university community work to solve them. Those issues include our probationary status from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) resulting primarily from the University's handling of online courses, concerns such as high faculty teaching loads and insufficient faculty-student interaction in some courses.

I can assure our students and their families that we at Adams State University are working tirelessly to live up to our promises. During fall 2016, Adams State stopped offering online open enrollment credit-bearing courses which do not adhere to the fixed start dates of traditional academic terms. We also adopted a new policy for faculty course loads, including faculty who teach online. As I have stated many times, our accreditation from HLC remains in force while we work to correct these concerns, and we fully expect to remain accredited due to these and other corrective measures.

Our University is also taking steps not just to meet the status quo, but to further establish Adams State as a top-tier, forward-thinking academic institution. Adams State University will soon be home to a National Center for Historically-Underserved Students. The think-tank will be focused on the common barriers to recruiting, retaining and graduating students who have been historically-underserved by higher education. Those groups include racial and ethnic minorities, socioeconomically-challenged and first-generation students, military veterans, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students, and the academically underprepared, among others.

Adams State is the first four-year institution in Colorado to be federally designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI,) and we have the most diverse student population in the state. It seems, then, entirely appropriate, even necessary, for us to take a national stand in support of the students we serve.

All of us at Adams State firmly support the First Amendment and the right to free speech. Indeed, transparency and discourse are key tenets of any free society. What may appear to be criticisms can sometimes be malicious and biased misinformation. Websites, blogs, and social media claiming to operate in the public interest as figurative watchdogs can risk inciting a sort of Internet mob mentality by omitting key facts or putting people in false lights.

Beginning in November 2016, President Beverlee McClure has been accused of (1) discrimination against protected groups and at-risk populations, (2) creating hostile work environments, (3) retaliation against those she did not like, and (4) harboring homophobic tendencies. Concerns President McClure and I might have had about each other resulted from

misunderstanding and miscommunication. Based on fuller understanding and better communication between us, I do not make these accusations against her.

Regrettably as many of you already know, the friendship which President McClure and I formed quickly and easily has unfortunately dissolved and has begun to affect the university in a negative way. My husband and I freely admit that we have known and valued President McClure as a friend, co-worker, and colleague since moving to Alamosa. President McClure was instrumental in helping us secure a home near the university and attended our Halloween party and both of our birthday parties. In fact, she hosted my birthday party in her home.

Some people have used this opportunity to spread misinformation, including on the Watching Adams site. I deeply regret any challenges recent events have created, but I am also very hopeful and fully committed that together we can move forward toward more noble goals.

Real achievements such as the National Center for Historically-Underserved Students and the accomplishments President McClure and her team have achieved to move our university forward can be undermined or even forgotten altogether. When we expect the worst, we often find it. Careers and reputations that take lifetimes to build can be lost due to miscommunication or misinformation.

Sometimes free speech and due process, founding principles of our nation, can be at odds, and we must search for balance in all things. When we expect the best, we also often find it, so let us search together for the best in all of us. We can all complain and villainize others –that is easy enough; however, if we are going to overcome our challenges, what we need is positive, sincere, and truly open communication.

Let us appeal to the better selves which live within all of us. This is an interactive style which President McClure and I pledge to model together since we both care more about the institution than any personal gain. I ask you all to roll up your sleeves and join us in fixing our problems, celebrating our victories, and elevating this institution by elevating our discourse and supporting our president and Board of Trustees.

Let us all remember that we are here fundamentally to serve our students, and nothing should ever get in the way of that mission.



Dr. Chris Gilmer



Date