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ALVIN RIVERA: A renewed foundation for higher education

ALVIN RIVERA MAY 10, 2018



I recently have decided to toss my hat into the ring for the University of Colorado regent, 3rd Congressional District race. This decision has reinforced why my career in higher education and civic activism will serve as my staff as I enter into these often muddy waters, helping to ensure my lot as a political candidate.

As the flagship educational institution, the University of Colorado system has charted the course for Colorado since 1876. A date easily remembered, since my Ph.D. from CU-Boulder was awarded in the centennial year, 1976. As the record shows, my first donation to CU was in 1978 and my name has been on its monitors ever since. The same record now shows that my wife and I continue contributing to all four of our CU campuses -- CU-Colorado Springs, CU-Boulder, CU-Denver and the CU-Anschutz Campus.

What does this have to do with my candidacy and the CU system? Plenty, in fact it has just about everything to do with why I'm running. For starters, I am very concerned that the quality of education for every child in Colorado is becoming more and more costly every year and we need to stop the continuing escalating costs, especially for ordinary families with several children preparing to enter higher education. In this regard, CU may be its biggest enemy, as the costs have continued to rocket skyward in the last several years.

However, to CU's credit, an entering freshman now is able to pay the same tuition for the next four years. Also, there will be no additional fees, as in previous years, for special fields like the sciences, engineering, music and other academic areas.

In recent years, I have repeatedly encountered excellent academic students choosing to attend other higher education institutions closer to home or community/junior colleges due to the high costs of Colorado universities. This is such a potential loss of educational talent. Too often these students attending community/junior colleges never get to the universities because they drift away to accept jobs offered by businesses, other financial mainstream groups and government at the city, county, state and federal levels.

Too often people in our higher educational institutions seem isolated from what is going on outside their ivy-covered walls. Permit me to cite just two examples. Our public schools and financial support for them are an embarrassment for Colorado and the nation. Colorado's support for public education is ranked 42nd out of the 50 states. Where are the voices of CU leadership in the halls of the state Legislature to change this situation? Make no mistake, if I am elected, I will definitely weigh in on this issue as a CU regent.

We need to be proactive at every educational level. I will join the ranks of others who are clearly advocating on behalf of affordable higher education in Colorado. Once elected, I will be one of those advocates and, by working together, we will affect change. That's why I'm running to be your CU regent in the 3rd Congressional District.

My education at CU and other Colorado colleges has positioned me to be your advocate. Throughout my career in education at the national level, I acquired my civic-minded concern for a better society. I will be among the loudest voices to ensure every student in Colorado will have a chance at a higher education of his or her choosing. This, I promise you.

The second example is the isolation of Pueblo from the rest of Colorado. This topic is nothing new for people in Pueblo. We get it. A recent example that comes to mind is Gov. John Hickenlooper's comments when he spoke proudly in the Denver Post about the development occurring in Denver, Fort Collins and Colorado Springs. There was no mention of Pueblo, not a whisper. So, do you think my opponent for CU regent from Grand Junction will be Pueblo's advocate? Think again. It has not happened in the six years of his tenure. Why would it change in his second term?

In my opinion, we have a lot of work to do. If CU is going to remain a quality flagship institution, it will require an advocate to get the job done. I am asking for your vote in November to be your advocate

for affordable higher education in Colorado. Together, we will make these issues the hallmark that allows qualified students seeking a university education the opportunity to change their lives and lifestyles for generations to come.

A Pueblo resident and veteran, graduate of University of Colorado, Denver University, Colorado State University-Fort Collins and Trinidad Junior College, Alvin Rivera worked in two presidential administrations, Jimmy Carter's and Bill Clinton's, and was one of nine Colorado presidential electors for Barack Obama in 2012. He is the Democratic candidate for University of Colorado regent for the 3rd Congressional District in the November election.