

## March 9, 2026 Townhall Recap

*AI was utilized to support the development of this document. All questions asked were kept in their original format, and the responses from leadership were revised only for clarity while preserving the accuracy of what was shared during the March 9th Town Hall.*

### **Opening Remarks**

The Chancellor opened the Town Hall by acknowledging the faculty vote of censure and reaffirming that shared governance is essential to university life. She emphasized that faculty have every right to express concerns especially during a financial situation with such significant implications for the campus and the broader community. The Chancellor noted the tension and uncertainty many are feeling, encouraging the campus to support one another and maintain respect and care throughout the process. While the financial challenges are serious, the Chancellor underscored that UCCS remains a strong institution with dedicated faculty, staff, and students; meaningful research; impactful graduates; and deep connections to Colorado Springs and the state of Colorado. The remarks then addressed the broader context behind UCCS's financial position, including nationwide enrollment pressures, rising operational costs, and heavy reliance on tuition revenue. Leadership explained how the university's past use of one-time funds created structural imbalances that must now be corrected. To move forward, UCCS is adopting a multi-year budget model, strengthening financial controls, and planning strategically for both necessary reductions and future investments aligned with the university's mission. The Chancellor emphasized that UCCS is not simply reacting to a short-term challenge; rather, the university is using this moment to design the UCCS of the future, guided by collaboration, resilience, innovation, and the Differentiator.

[Watch the Recorded Opening Remarks](#) by logging into Zoom with your UCCS account and providing the Passcode: qZe%&ph5

### **In Person and Live Q&A**

**Question 1: Budget deficits are not new to UCCS. We have run deficits over the past 20 years. Plus, the ELT has stated that it is only recently that they discovered the depth of the deficit. Why then are we rushing to close the deficit now? Wouldn't it be more prudent to address immediate needs and develop a reasoned strategy over the next year to permanently address these shortfalls?**

#### **Response:**

The university has recently uncovered a clearer picture of how one-time funds and reserves have been used to support ongoing activities. We are now running out of reserves that previously helped cushion these expenses. Each ongoing activity supported by onetime dollars has a defined "glide path" showing when those funds will run out, and we must be prepared to absorb those costs into the base budget.

Originally, some reductions tied to these glide paths should have occurred this year. Based on shared governance input, leadership delayed those reductions by one year, which required dipping further into reserves. This reduces our ability to cushion future shortfalls and makes later cuts larger and more disruptive.

The strategy has shifted toward addressing issues as they arise, rather than delaying action. Waiting increases the total amount that must be cut at once. By moving now, the university can spread reductions over time and preserve what reserves remain. Although this timeline may feel fast, it is already slower than originally planned due to shared governance input.

**Question 2: How do we plan to address employee morale and retention throughout this period of cuts, stalled advancement, and stagnant compensation?**

**Response:**

This is one of the most difficult challenges ahead. Several efforts are underway:

- **Working Group on Employee Experience:** A cross-campus group, including HR and Staff Council, is determining how to support employees compassionately throughout the reduction process, including those who may separate and those who remain.
- **Temporary Compensation Increase:** Based on shared governance feedback, the FY27 budget scenario includes a temporary increase as a gesture of appreciation and encouragement to remain at UCCS during this difficult period.
- **Improved Work-Life Flexibility:** Units are working to expand scheduling flexibility, especially for staff, to help support well-being and balance.
- **Community Building Opportunities:** Leadership is encouraging more opportunities to reconnect, attend events, and strengthen UCCS culture.
- **Focus on Well Being:** Faculty, staff, and student wellbeing efforts are being coordinated through HR and leadership teams. Leaders emphasized that when employees are unwell, students are impacted.
- **Reducing Administrative Burden:** As part of evaluating areas for reductions, leadership is also looking for ways to streamline work and reduce the “do more with less” pressure that contributes to burnout.
- **Support for Faculty:** The Interim Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs is part of the working group focused specifically on faculty needs.

Overall, leadership emphasized the importance of community, transparent communication, and progressing through the process together.

**Question 3: In light of the vote of censure, faculty have overwhelmingly expressed their concerns with ELT's approach thus far. How do we plan to adjust the approach?**

**Response:**

Town halls like this one is a key part of addressing concerns. Since May, the University Leadership Team (ULT), which includes leaders from Faculty Assembly, Staff Council, Student Government, UBAC, and the Budget Advisory Committee, has met regularly to review finances and develop the multi-year model.

Leadership meets frequently with shared governance groups both as a collective and individually, and participates in monthly Faculty Assembly, Staff Council, and SGA meetings. The goal is to increase transparency, provide more opportunities for questions, and have deeper conversations about the budget and decision making process.

The University Leadership Team (ULT) recognize that fear and uncertainty drive much of the frustration. To counter this, they aim to maintain open, honest, and consistent communication, even when the answer is “we don’t know yet.”

The ULT continues to expand opportunities for input, including through the Healthy Campus inquiry form. Hundreds of questions have already been received and are updated weekly. Leadership reiterated their willingness to adapt formats, hold additional forums, and respond directly when more clarity is needed.

Deans of the College of Engineering & Applied Sciences, College of Business, and College of Beth El & Health Sciences also described their college-level shared governance processes, noting that while each college operates differently, all involve consultation with chairs, faculty, and leadership teams. Faculty concerns and ideas are heard at the college level, and the deans emphasized their commitment to supporting faculty careers and maintaining trust.

**Question 4: As we move toward budget cuts, where are we investing? What programs are we investing in because they meet student needs, support local industry, and align with our mission as a state institution?**

**Response:**

The planning for budget reductions and planning for the future must happen simultaneously. The university cannot pause strategic work while addressing the budget crisis. Addressing our budget now will clarify UCCS’s identity and allow the institution to invest in key areas aligned with workforce needs, student success, and community expectations.

Key points include:

- **Alignment with State Workforce Needs:** UCCS uses the annual statewide Talent Pipeline Report to understand emerging workforce trends. As a regional comprehensive university with an R2 mission, UCCS is uniquely positioned to support Southern Colorado’s economic and workforce needs, which has been core to the institution’s identity since its founding.
- **The Differentiator Project:** Guided by extensive data from faculty, staff, students, parents, school districts, and community partners, the Differentiator outlines what UCCS is known for and how it provides value. Five working groups launched this semester to translate this vision into measurable priorities connected to the strategic plan, enrollment strategy, and accreditation.
- **Evaluating All Programs:** As cuts proceed, each program will be evaluated in the context of future direction. The university is identifying what should be continued, strengthened, or discontinued, with investments targeted toward programs that best meet student and community needs.
- **Interest from External Funders:** Foundations and community partners are expressing interest in supporting UCCS’s future vision. Leadership has already had several conversations with funders who see potential in the Differentiator and may offer seed funding or connections. If new revenue becomes available more quickly, planned reductions can be paused.

- **Diversified Revenue Streams:** Increasing non-tuition revenue through grants, partnerships, and philanthropy is a key strategy to reduce the need for cuts.

**Question 5: When will faculty and staff be notified if they are let go? Why wait until May? Anxiety is high, and people deserve an open answer and enough time to find other jobs.**

**Response:**

While ULT acknowledges and understands the impact that uncertainty creates, they emphasized the importance of a methodical, careful, and lawful process. The timeline is driven by:

- **Efforts to Minimize Separations:** Leadership is trying to avoid employee separations for as long as possible while still achieving required reductions.
- **Required Analyses:** Any separation must undergo a business analysis, HR evaluation, and legal review. With limited staffing, this process takes time to complete carefully and correctly.
- **Different Processes for Different Employee Groups:**
  - **At-will employees:** Notifications are expected in **late April to early May**.
  - **Academic program discontinuances:** These require a full shared governance process and longer timelines, plus program teach out requirements for students.

**Question 6: Why did the university move away from assigning specific dollar amounts or percentages for each division/college to cut, as initially described on January 30, and instead return to a collaborative process similar to recent years? What are the implications of this change?**

**Response:**

The shift resulted from extensive campus feedback. During meetings in December and January, faculty and staff made it clear that they **did not** want:

- Across the board cuts
- Percentage based cuts
- Cuts assigned without understanding unit level impact
- Decision making in silos

A campuswide budget survey reinforced this, and more than 100 respondents emphasized the need for:

- Multi-year planning
- Preserving essential student support services
- Holistic evaluation of impacts across the university
- A definition of a “healthy campus” focused on community well-being (not only finances)

After considering alternatives, ULT explored the possibility of using a rubric. The idea was discussed at UBAC meetings on January 29–30 and generated significant feedback indicating it was not the right approach.

Based on that input, leadership moved to a collaborative, iterative process with clearly defined steps:

- Vice chancellors and deans evaluate operations within their divisions.
- Proposals are reviewed collectively to understand campuswide impact.
- The process prioritizes avoiding employee separations as long as possible.

This approach also encourages innovation, technology use, and process redesign, all essential as workloads and structures evolve.

It was also highlighted that UCCS has undergone multiple major budget reductions over the past 20 years, including after 9/11 and during the 2008 financial crisis. Moving forward, the university must adopt a strategic, multiyear model rather than repeating short term fixes.

### **Closing Remarks**

Vice Chancellor Robin Parent concluded the Town Hall by acknowledging the remaining unanswered questions and ULT's commitment to aligning them with the existing budget FAQ or adding new FAQs to the website. Healthy Campus weekly updates will continue to appear in UCCS News, and the recording and notes from the Town Hall will be made available on the Healthy Campus website. Additional town halls will follow the same format, and ULT is willing to adjust the format based on feedback. The session ended with appreciation for attendees, organizers, and those submitting questions. ULT reiterated their commitment to transparency, collaboration, and navigating this period in the least painful way possible while positioning UCCS for future success.