

April 1, 2026 Town Hall FAQs

The following FAQs were developed based on the questions received during the April 1, 2026 Town Hall. All recommendations and feedback that were provided in the Q&A section of the Town Hall were shared with the Senior Leadership Team.

I would like to ask about the broader context—specifically how these decisions fit within the state budget, Regent directives, and the CU system as a whole.

Answer: The State provides about 8% of our total UCCS budget. As a state enterprise, UCCS must follow all state laws. We also follow all Regent laws and policies, one of which is to submit a balanced budget each year for Regent approval. The CU system is made up of a system office and 4 campuses. The system office ensure that we are compliant with state law, Regent law and policy and campus policy.

Are we receiving an appropriate level of funding relative to other campuses and are other campuses experiencing similar shortfalls in core operational areas?

Answer: The State of Colorado uses a performance funding model to allocate state funds to board and universities/colleges. If we increase our retention rates, graduation rates and enrollment, we could receive increased funding from the State of Colorado. Our primary source of revenue comes from student tuition fees. One of the reasons we have seen weak growth in revenue is because our enrollment has fallen from 12,500 students to 11,100 students. If we turn around enrollment declines into growth, this would significantly alter our financial situation. Other CU campuses, like CU Boulder and CU Anschutz, are experiencing student enrollment growth and research growth. CU Denver in the past has experienced enrollment declines. As they grow their enrollment, their revenues are also growing.

To what extent are these issues being discussed within the system and with the Regents? Is there any consideration of reallocating resources across campuses to provide support?

Answer: The CU System and Board of Regents are well informed and support our efforts to grow revenue, contain costs and reallocate resources. The CU System allocates State revenue based on the State formula. The best way to improve our allocation is to grow enrollment through increased retention and graduation rates.

Why are we not looking at faculty workloads?

Answer: We are, and it is part of the broader conversation. As we work through budget reductions, all areas of Academic Affairs are being considered, including how we structure and assign faculty workload. That said, changes to workload are more complex than many

other cost-saving measures and must be approached thoughtfully and within established policies. We are actively exploring workload as part of longer-term, more sustainable solutions. This includes examining how teaching loads, course delivery, and faculty assignments align with student demand, program needs, and institutional priorities.

The rebranding acronym to now CU Colorado Springs is concerning. Please take that into consideration.

Answer: We've heard a lot of feedback about this concern and we understand the issue. To clarify, what is under consideration is not a new acronym or a new university name, but an alignment of the visual representation of our formal name with the university system and sister campuses. If we adopt the interlocking CU in place of the block UCCS, our name and formal logo will continue to be University of Colorado Colorado Springs. No final decision has been made.

Is a major responsibility of the chancellor's role fundraising, what has that looked like the past three years?

Answer: Yes, fundraising is a core responsibility of the Chancellor. Over the last three years, efforts have focused on community relationship building, donor cultivation, and building support for top campus initiatives which aligned to donor interest areas. In addition to building philanthropic support, focused efforts are in place to expand potential funding through aligned opportunities with our government relations team. While philanthropy and resource development efforts support scholarships, programs, and facilities, it cannot legally or practically replace operating revenue or cover structural deficits. Fundraising is necessary, but it is not a short-term solution to a budget of this scale. Each year Chancellor Sobanet has been here, we have met or exceeded our fundraising goals. Our goals have been focused on providing student scholarships, funding efforts to expand faculty work and enhance the campus community. Specific efforts include establishing the first endowment for the Center for the Study of Government and Individual, raising support for the Anschutz Engineering Center and remodel of the engineering building, the Ent Center for the Arts, raising funding in support of research through the Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience, and advocacy to receive federal funding in support of the Center for the Digital Humanities. Additional efforts include outreach and industry conversations to expand partnerships to create a Quantum minor in physics, to create paid internships and apprenticeships in education and the health sciences, as well as funding for programs that teach creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. This summer, the Student Life Lounge will be renovated thanks to donors who wanted to support the Chancellor's goal of improving our student experience through feedback from student government.

Why don't we have some sort of budget overview provided (like a Sankey diagram) that would provide us more insight for any suggestions we could provide? The numbers provided are not granular, nor digestible enough to inform the community on how we might propose ways to increase revenue or decrease spending.

Answer: The university has been straddled with expensive developments on North Nevada (Ent Center, Hybl, Cyber building, Lane Center). Faculty opposed those developments 10, 15, 20 years ago and yet now faculty and staff are expected to pay for those buildings with our labor, loss of our jobs, and lowered salaries. What are you doing to address those sunk costs? Are you trying to lease, sell, and otherwise remove those costs?

Answer: The university recognizes the concern that past capital investments are contributing to today's financial pressure, and it is important to distinguish why those investments were made, how they were financed, and what options exist now.

Each of the facilities cited: the ENT Center for the Arts, the Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center, the Cybersecurity Building, and the Lane Center were developed at different moments in the institution's history in response to documented academic or enrollment needs and external opportunities. Records related to these decisions, including capital proposals and campus master facility plans, are available through facilities planning archives and reflect conditions at the time, including significant shortages and over-utilization of instructional and clinical space.

Examples include:

- Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center, which emerged from a faculty-engaged planning process within the College of Nursing and Health Sciences to support enrollment growth and clinical education capacity.
- ENT Center for the Arts, which addressed a longstanding academic facilities gap for the Visual and Performing Arts. Prior to its construction, music and performance students often rehearsed and performed in spaces not designed for instruction, including loading-docks and temporary facilities.
- Cybersecurity Building, which was pursued after the university received an \$8M grant contingent on using and renovating the facility for cybersecurity education. Subsequent build-out was supported through a combination of federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants and philanthropic fundraising.
- Lane Center, which similarly supported academic and community-based program needs tied to student success and engagement.

These projects were strategic investments intended to expand academic programs, attract students, respond to workforce demand, and leverage external funding, not to rely on

operating dollars alone. That said, the university fully acknowledges that sunk capital costs are now part of the ongoing operating environment. While capital construction funds and operating budgets are governed differently, leadership is actively examining:

- Space utilization and consolidation opportunities
- Leasing or partnership options, where permissible and aligned with academic priorities
- Operating cost containment strategies related to utilities, maintenance, and scheduling
- Revenue-generating uses that do not undermine academic mission or accreditations

Not all facilities can be sold or leased due to financing structures, donor restrictions, bond covenants, or academic requirements. However, the institution is committed to using existing assets as efficiently as possible and avoiding new capital obligations that would increase long-term operating risk. University leadership also recognizes the frustration that decisions made years ago are now being felt by faculty and staff. While current employees did not make those decisions, the responsibility today is to manage their consequences transparently, prioritize academic continuity, and ensure that any future facilities planning is fiscally sustainable, faculty-informed, and aligned with realistic enrollment and revenue projections.

How did you get vacancy number? If colleges have already given up some vacancies, what are these on top of it? Will it cause more strain on faculty workloads?

Answer: The vacancy numbers reflects positions currently unfilled and projected attrition, not vacancies already surrendered by colleges. It is incremental, not duplicative. However, yes, not filling positions can increase workload pressure, and that is one of the hardest trade-offs we face. This is why vacancy management is being applied selectively, with attention to instructional and student facing impact.

Research is a pillar and a differentiator. With the cuts proposed there is major concern that faculty will have higher workloads and less time for research which then puts our R2 status in jeopardy. This is in contrast to what you are saying we want to highlight at UCCS. How are you going to keep research a priority and pillar when there are less resources available?

Answer: Research is not just something we say is a priority, it is central to who we are as a university, to our R2 trajectory, and to our broader impact on students, workforce development, and the community. We cannot and will not advance as an institution if research erodes. At the same time, we are operating in a constrained environment, which means we have to be more intentional about how we support research, not less committed

to it. Our approach moving forward is focused on protecting and prioritizing research capacity. This includes being intentional about workload, not simply increasing it and prioritizing research-active areas and faculty. Ultimately, being an R2 institution is not just about aspiration; it requires alignment of time, support, and strategy. Our goal is to ensure that, even in a challenging financial moment, we make decisions that preserve and strengthen research as a core pillar of UCCS.

Why do all of the communications use flowery language to describe cuts? "Salary reductions" instead of pay cuts. "Eliminating at-will positions" rather than layoffs of university staff and IRC faculty. "Not filling vacant positions" replaces shifting workload to existing staff and faculty. Please call a spade a spade, speak plainly and use language that conveys the true nature of the cuts.

Answer: Language is important. None of the concepts we're discussing are simple, and these nuances in language reflect our intention to be clear while also respecting the complexity of processes and the impacts on people.

Will sick and vacation payouts be a part of the severance package?

Answer: Payouts for accrued sick and vacation leave will follow existing policy and legal requirements. These are separate from severance and are not discretionary. Individuals affected will receive clear, written guidance specific to their situation.

Are severance packages being covered centrally?

Answer: Yes. Severance costs are being managed centrally, not pushed onto individual colleges/units. This is intentional, to ensure consistency and avoid further destabilizing colleges or departments.

Why aren't we looking at removing GPS? It is a high cost program. It would be better to have an orientation style experience in each college.

Answer: We are looking at GPS as part of the broader budget conversation. No program or unit is exempt from review, including GPS. At the same time, decisions about programs like GPS require us to weigh both cost and impact. The question is not simply whether GPS exists or not, it's whether we are delivering these supports in the most effective and efficient way possible. Our goal is to ensure that we are supporting students in a way that is both impactful and financially sustainable.

What will happen to the Vice provost of Research line? It is critical that this line is filled. Cutting this line would be a clear message that ELT does not care about

research. This also would indicate a clear lack of understanding of what Higher Education's mission and impact on society.

Answer: We want to be very clear: research remains a core part of our mission as a university, and that is not changing. The VP for Research role is currently under review as part of the broader budget process, but that review should not be interpreted as a lack of commitment to research. Rather, we are evaluating how best to structure leadership and support for research in a way that is both effective and sustainable given our current financial realities. Our goal is not to step back from research, but to be intentional about how we sustain and grow it.

After this year's layoffs, will there be additional layoffs in years to come as we seek to reconcile this \$27.7M shortfall?

Answer: Reducing expense budgets by implementing "At-Will" employee separations is always a last resort, and for FY27 there are no proposed separations. We cannot say there will never be future reductions. These decisions depend on meeting our enrollment and revenue objectives. We are being intentional to create financial stability going forward, and to break the continuous cycle of ongoing cuts.

Will the severance payout be in one lump payout or over time such as biweekly? If over time, will the severance pay stop if we get a new job?

Answer: Severance is typically paid in one lump sum. If a person transfers to another university position prior to receiving severance, then severance will not be paid. If a person accepts another university position after their termination, then they would keep their severance.

How much is differentiator project costing us?

Answer: The differentiator is about strategic alignment of priorities and our promise to our campus community and stakeholders of what we're committed to. Like the logo update, we're not spending new money, rather we're strategically aligning how we spend money in support of our institutional priorities. Staff time and resources have been involved in soliciting feedback, building the framework and identifying opportunities to refine existing and planned expenditures, but there isn't a line item in the budget for the differentiator.

Chancellor, what is your vision of the role of the university in public life? The cuts that have been proposed to UBAC seem to undermine the idea of a university as a teaching institution by burdening faculty and reducing the pay for that increased burden. What do you think we should be in the world? What role do you see the university playing?

Answer: My vision for our university remains a reflection of our institutional vision: UCCS, a premier comprehensive undergraduate and specialized graduate research university, provides students with academically rigorous and life-enriching experiences in a vibrant university community. We advance knowledge, integrate student learning with the spirit of discovery, and broaden access to higher education for the benefit of southern Colorado, the state, the nation, and the world. As we renew our strategic focus in FY27 and beyond, we'll remain focused on delivering high-quality education, innovating solutions to local and global challenges to improve the human condition, and contributing positively to the community and the workforce in Colorado Springs and beyond.

Why have ELT members received salary raises in the last few years when faculty have not?

Answer: In the two and a half years that Chancellor Sobanet has been in her role, executive leadership compensation decisions have been approached with intentional restraint and a focus on long-term fiscal sustainability. During this period, the Chancellor has intentionally reduced the number of ELT members from eight positions to six positions (one of which is UCCS's Legal Representative whose position is funded by the System Office) and ensured any new leadership positions were hired at an equitable and fiscally responsible rate. These strategic decisions have saved the University \$400K in ongoing salary savings. It is also important to note that not all leadership salary adjustments represent discretionary raises; some were tied to role changes, scope increases, or market alignment (as noted by the System Office, Chancellor Sobanet's raise is supported ongoing by System funds and not UCCS base budget). Additionally, Vice Chancellor Parent announced at April town hall that she, alongside Chancellor Sobanet, have taken a compensation reduction to support the current FY 27 budgeting process.

Why is the university not pursuing retrenchment or declaring Financial Exigency in response to current financial challenges?

Answer: At this time, the university is not pursuing retrenchment or declaring Financial Exigency because both actions are defined by the CU Board of Regents as last resort measures with significant and long-lasting academic, contractual, and reputational consequences. Under CU Board of Regents law and policy, a declaration of Financial Exigency is reserved for circumstances in which the institution's financial condition cannot be resolved through less severe means. Once declared, Financial Exigency substantially limits local discretion, activates mandatory system-level processes, and may require actions such as program discontinuance, faculty appointment terminations, and retrenchment that are difficult to reverse.

Consistent with Regents policy, campus leadership is first pursuing targeted budget reductions, structural and academic efficiencies and realignments, and operational changes to stabilize finances to support long term institutional capacity. Current financial conditions, while serious, remain within a range where these actions can address the shortfall without invoking Financial Exigency or retrenchment thresholds. Campus leadership continues to monitor financial conditions closely, and any future consideration of Financial Exigency or retrenchment would follow CU Board of Regents.