

April 1, 2026 Town Hall Recap

All 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 April 1, 2026 Town Hall.

The recording of the Town Hall opening remarks and the PowerPoint shared can be found on the Healthy Campus website.

Because of the sensitive nature of the Q&A, the town hall Q&A session was not recorded. Below is a summary of remarks, questions, and answers.

Opening Remarks

Chancellor Sobanet opened the town hall by acknowledging the difficulty and emotional weight, thanking the campus community for their engagement and participation. She emphasized that transparency requested by UBAC and supported by leadership is essential to sound decision-making. UCCS is not alone in facing these financial challenges, and while the campus has some unique factors, the broader pressures mirror those facing institutions nationally. She encouraged continued use of established communication channels, attention to personal well-being, and confidence that the campus will move through this challenging period together.

She reviewed the collaborative, iterative process undertaken since February with the Senior Leadership team to identify budget reductions. That work resulted in approximately \$8.7 million in base reductions toward the \$11.7 million target, drawn from a combination of unallocated base funds, position vacancies, and the elimination of \$1.6 million in at-will filled positions, which will result in separations. Using the Chancellor's Office as an example, she explained how units approached reductions differently based on capacity, including her decision to reduce her own compensation. She also clarified that while academic program discontinuance remains a potential strategy, the timeline required prevented it from being included in this year's decisions. Several options to bridge the remaining gap to \$11.7 million were presented, reflecting both earlier thinking and newly validated scenarios; these options combine base reductions, additional vacancies, and proposed salary reductions for faculty and staff.

In response to campus feedback, the Chancellor outlined possible salary reduction models as optional components, presented in both percentage and week-equivalent formats for clarity. Two approaches were shared, both designed to place greater responsibility on higher earners while minimizing impact on lower-paid employees. She also highlighted a new idea generated through forum feedback, exploring adjustments to the holiday schedule to help offset the impact of a salary reduction, pending further review of academic and operational implications. Finally, the Chancellor detailed how the

university would support employees whose positions may be eliminated, including notification timelines, continuation of benefits, and a separation package. She closed by reaffirming leadership's commitment to care, transparency, and collaboration, and invited continued feedback as the process moves forward.

In-Person and Live Q&A

Question 1: I am taking in all of this information. I am hearing the proposed cuts across the board. I want to take your example, Chancellor, directly. The things you say you are cutting are those that may not have been based; they are things like student travel funding. When we look at the proposed cuts to base salary, we are cutting people's pay and telling them to do more work for less pay. You have made statements recently about looking at increasing faculty teaching work. I know that I am not teaching faculty, but I have talked to my liaison faculty and hear from people, and it seems to me that all of the cuts we are proposing are going to make the UCCS experience materially worse. What I want to know is, how should we trust that this is a strategic proposal, and what are the values driving this?

Response:

University leadership began by acknowledging that no one wants to be in the position of making these kinds of cuts. The values guiding this work were described as rooted in the long-term sustainability of the university and in minimizing disruption to the institution's core mission, particularly the student experience and academic programs. Where it has been possible to reduce expenses in ways that limit negative impact, those approaches have been prioritized. Leadership emphasized, however, that it would not be realistic to claim these reductions will have no impact; the situation is extremely difficult and will affect aspects of how the university operates on a daily basis.

As an example, leadership referenced an early budget decision made two years ago to eliminate alcohol at the annual awards ceremony. While this change might appear minor, it resulted in thousands of dollars in savings without materially altering the experience of the event, which continued to recognize colleagues and maintain a spirit of celebration. This example was shared to illustrate the types of decisions that are pursued first, while acknowledging that choices become increasingly difficult as additional reductions are required.

Leadership emphasized the importance of working collectively to create an environment in which people can continue to flourish, even with fewer resources. Doing so requires partnership, creativity, and shared problem solving. Hundreds of hours have been devoted to this work, with leaders across the university engaging in deep review of budgets in collaboration with division and college teams. The process involved significant discussion, debate, and careful deliberation. This level of intentionality is why across-the-

board cuts were not implemented. Instead, the senior leadership team were given flexibility to make more strategic, context specific decisions, resulting in varying levels of impact across colleges and divisions. Ultimately, leadership stressed that these decisions are being made as thoughtfully and strategically as possible, guided by shared values and the responsibility to sustain UCCS into the future.

Question 2: I understand that they are exploring tier-based salary reductions, but I would like to offer an alternative: implementing a mandatory set amount of time off, such as five furlough days, that employees can schedule throughout the year in coordination with their department. This approach could help the university achieve needed cost savings while preserving jobs. It also provides individuals with some flexibility to plan around operational needs, rather than reducing the value of employees through across the board pay cuts.

Response:

University leadership noted that this approach has been discussed previously. As shared in UBAC, furloughs are intended to be temporary, and one of the first priorities as revenues begin to grow would be restoring employees to the compensation threshold that existed prior to base reductions. Salary reductions, by contrast, have a recurring impact on compensation year after year, whereas furloughs would need to be reissued annually only if ongoing savings were required.

Leadership also noted that the idea of pairing furloughs with flexibility, such as floating or scheduled time off, is similar to a new idea that emerged from recent campus feedback and was shared in the presentation slides. There appears to be interest and energy around this approach, and leadership indicated openness to exploring it further. The suggestion will be taken into consideration as part of the continued evaluation of available budget reduction options.

Question 3: Since we are discussing the future of UCCS, please tell us why employees should stay or come to work at UCCS. You have cut pay, limited career development, and increased workloads. There is a culture of fear and threatened layoffs. It isn't enough to stay as an organization.

Response:

University leadership acknowledged the seriousness and emotional toll of the current moment, recognizing that faculty and staff across UCCS are experiencing significant strain. The impacts of budget reductions, increased workloads, and uncertainty are real, and leaders emphasized that it would be disingenuous to minimize those effects. At the same time, they affirmed that UCCS remains a meaningful and mission-driven

institution because of its people and their commitment to students. Faculty and staff play a central role in supporting students' aspirations and lifechanging opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, and that core purpose remains unchanged.

Several leaders shared reflections from their own units and experiences. Library leadership spoke to the intentional effort over many years to build a strong, supportive community and noted that, even during this extremely difficult time, the focus remains on caring for people while continuing to sustain the mission and infrastructure of the university. While the present circumstances are challenging, there is a belief that working through them together will create a stronger foundation for the future. Leaders emphasized their commitment to continuing to build on what has already been established, despite the constraints imposed by the current environment.

Other leaders emphasized the importance of a longer-term perspective. One dean reflected that while the role looks very different now than when they were hired, the heart of the work, serving students and the broader community, remains deeply fulfilling. Although the process underway is painful, it is also seen as necessary for positioning the university for a healthier and more sustainable future. In several years, the institution may look and feel different, but leaders expressed hope that it will be more agile, fiscally stable, and better prepared for the next decade. The university is learning difficult but important lessons about anticipating trends, adapting to change, and responding proactively. Leadership concluded by recognizing that this is likely the hardest phase of the process, likening it to the deepest stages of grief. They acknowledged that despair and fear are understandable reactions. However, leaders also expressed confidence that by moving through this period together, the campus community can emerge with a renewed vision for UCCS: one grounded in resilience, growth, and the extraordinary people who define the institution. The hope shared was that, once the university resets its trajectory, faculty and staff will continue to see UCCS as a place worth staying and helping to build into the future.

Question 4: Referring to 6 salary reduction options – some have surplus and some deficit. Those with a deficit, how is that a valid option? Those with surplus, what are we going to do with the surplus? What's the priority?

Response:

University leadership explained that the budget remains in a fluid state, as final guidance from the legislature and the system office, including revenue projections and mandatory obligations, have not yet been received. While the working reduction target is \$11.7 million, that figure is intentionally described as a target rather than a fixed number, as it may change once final information is available. Typically, this information is known by the end of March, but leadership expects clearer direction by the Board of Regents meeting in

mid-April, at which point options can be aligned more precisely with the confirmed dollar amount. Because of this uncertainty, some flexibility was built into the options, resulting in scenarios that show either modest surplus or deficit. Leadership emphasized that salary-based reductions were the last component they hoped to pursue and would be the first to reduce or eliminate if updated budget data allows. The intent behind presenting multiple options was to retain room to adjust once final numbers are known, rather than locking the campus into a single approach prematurely.

Question 5: If salary cuts are absolutely necessary, is it possible to explore higher percentage cuts? Whether lower earning employees get a small cut or no cut, however it feels like we should be exploring options for higher earning employees.

Response:

Leadership explained that the salary reduction options presented were designed to be evaluated by the campus community through the UBAC process. Additional ideas or alternative models, including adjustments that further increase reductions for higher earning employees, are encouraged to be submitted through UBAC representatives. Final decisions will be made by the University Leadership Team after reviewing UBAC recommendations and campus feedback. In developing the current options, leadership first identified the total savings needed to reach the reduction target, then worked through multiple scenarios in collaboration with the Budget Office and Human Resources. The options include tiered approaches that increase the percentage impact at higher salary levels, while attempting to mitigate the greatest impact on the largest salary bands, particularly employees earning between approximately \$60,000 and \$90,000. Leadership noted that while these were the initial models presented for discussion, additional options may still be considered based on feedback.

Question 6: We are talking about transparency. We just found out about salaries. How do we get past the Colorado Equal Pay Act? Some of us had to be evaluated to get more money. If you reduce their salary, you would be facing a lawsuit, and for transparency, again, I was one of those with success. I would hate for my colleagues to lose money. You cannot do anything because of the law. I do not think we are doing anything transparent. To hear something else from somebody would be detrimental to the leadership if they have not thought about this.

Response:

Leadership stated that Human Resources has been actively involved in evaluating how any potential salary actions would intersect with the Colorado Equal Pay Act and

related legal requirements. These considerations are raised in every discussion regarding salary-based reductions. While leadership did not outline specific legal determinations during the town hall, they emphasized that compliance and risk mitigation are central to the analysis. Any changes that involve adjustments to duties, compensation, or role scope would require careful, individualized assessment, similar to existing reassessment processes. Leadership acknowledged that many of these cases fall at the margins and require heightened caution. They reiterated that such decisions would need to be managed on an individual basis, in close coordination with Human Resources, to ensure legal compliance and fairness.

Question 7: Why are we even discussing a rebrand? What research market study has been done to show that it would even bring in more students? This seems like a crazy thing to bring to us in the middle of these massive cuts. Rebrands cost millions of dollars.

Response:

Leadership explained that the discussion of branding is tied directly to the Strategic Enrollment Plan rolled out last spring. That plan, informed by work conducted over several prior years, identified brand recognition and alignment as critical components of enrollment management. As part of that strategy, a comprehensive market survey was completed and presented to senior leadership in March 2025; the results are publicly available online. The study found strong recognition of the UCCS brand alongside opportunities to better align with the broader CU system brand to improve visibility and reach.

Leadership emphasized that this is not a finalized decision and that cultural identity and institutional values remain paramount. Rather than proposing a large, immediate investment, leadership described a phased approach that focuses first on low-cost, high-impact changes and alignment with work already underway, including messaging tied to the campus differentiator announced in December. Coordinating messaging updates simultaneously is intended to reduce costs related to collateral, outreach, and recruitment materials. Potential changes would follow normal replacement cycles, leverage onetime donor support where possible, and avoid unnecessary expenditures. The goal is not to spend new dollars indiscriminately, but to responsibly evaluate whether strategic alignment could support long-term enrollment growth.

Question 8: The question we had earlier—I have been ruminating a lot this session. We come back to data and the confidence in data. Everybody on our panel, I would like to ask you to share whether you feel confident.

Response:

Panelists emphasized that data-informed decision making is fundamental to how deans and vice chancellors lead their units and approach budget, enrollment, and academic planning. Across the panel, leaders shared that they work extensively with data from multiple sources—including enrollment, instructional activity, personnel, and financial systems—and generally expressed confidence in the data they use to manage their specific areas. At the same time, they were candid in acknowledging that data interpretation is complex and that discrepancies can arise depending on how data are defined, collected, coded, or reported.

Several leaders noted that what may initially appear to be conflicting or inaccurate data often reflects differences in context rather than flaws in the data itself. For example, variations can occur due to crosslisted courses, instructors teaching across departments, timing of data pulls, or differences between state reportable data and internal planning data. Leaders described the process of “scrubbing” data—examining it closely, asking questions, and refining it for its intended purpose—as an essential step in responsible use. They emphasized that data must be understood within its operational and academic context to be meaningful.

The panel also highlighted that this budget process has required unprecedented levels of collaboration around data. Over the past several months, leaders have worked closely with Academic Affairs, the Budget Office, Institutional Research, Human Resources, and the Controller’s Office to reconcile differences, troubleshoot inconsistencies, and clarify assumptions. Many described this work as both iterative and educational, noting that through repeated discussion and comparison, confidence in shared data has increased. Where discrepancies were identified, leaders reported that teams were responsive and collaborative in working toward resolution.

Several panelists characterized effective data use as both a science and an art. While quantitative data provides essential structure and clarity, judgment, experience, and dialogue are required to interpret what the data means for different units, disciplines, and missions. Leaders emphasized that decentralized institutions like UCCS face particular challenges in standardizing definitions and practices, which makes ongoing communication and alignment critical. Moving forward, panelists expressed strong support for developing clearer data standards, consistent naming conventions, shared protocols, and improved systems—including new budget technologies—to strengthen trust and reduce confusion over time.

Overall, while leaders acknowledged frustration when data does not immediately align, they expressed confidence that the collaborative processes used during this initiative have strengthened the institution’s capacity for transparent, data-informed decision making. The panel agreed that the lessons learned through this work—about data

governance, interpretation, and cross-unit collaboration—will be essential not only for the current budget challenges, but for future planning and sustainability at UCCS.

Question 9: Regarding position vacancies, there needs to be more transparency about which positions are not being filled. What is the base number of positions that will not be filled, and how does that change across the different options? It is important to ensure we continue to meet compliance and accreditation standards. Right now, staff and faculty do not know which specific positions may remain vacant. Some leaders have begun to share this information verbally, but there is concern that accreditation is at risk if required positions are not filled, and that loss of accreditation would affect everyone. There should be a clear posting that shows the baseline number of positions, the updated numbers as options change, and an explanation of where those changes occur.

Response:

University leadership acknowledged the concern regarding position vacancies and the need for greater transparency. They explained that vacancy information currently varies by unit and is dependent on which budget option is ultimately selected. Over the next several weeks, once leadership confirms the option to be used, the underlying data will be finalized. At that point, each dean will work directly with their leadership teams to clearly identify which specific positions will not be filled as part of the base reduction, ensuring that employees have a shared understanding of the impacts within their respective units.

Leadership emphasized that vacancy decisions tied to the base reduction are distinct from additional changes that may occur depending on the selected option. They also noted that position reductions are occurring broadly across the institution and are not isolated to any single unit. Several leaders reflected that budget reductions of this type are, unfortunately, a recurring reality in higher education and have been managed multiple times in past leadership roles.

Importantly, leadership underscored that all vacancy decisions are being evaluated with compliance and accreditation requirements in mind. While reductions are necessary, leaders affirmed their responsibility to be thoughtful and deliberate to ensure that essential functions—particularly those tied to accreditation, regulatory compliance, and core academic operations—are maintained. As decisions are finalized, units will be expected to balance fiscal constraints with these critical obligations.