

Notes From Ground Zero: Budgetary Crises and Academic Freedom at the University of Colorado¹

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Colorado higher education is ground zero for neoconservative attacks on academic freedom, shared governance, and faculty control of academic matters. Colorado's fiscal crisis has exacerbated the attacks and provides a cautionary tale for other universities. Lured by corporate largesse and benefactors from the business world, the University ceased hiring academics as top administrators. Principles protecting academic freedom have fallen victim to leaders who do not understand the degree to which academic freedom is essential to preserving open dialogue and rigorous science. Corporate-like restructuring of higher education governance also limits faculty participation and hence, their capacity to resist incursions on their authority. Four budgetary practices are key to diminution of academic freedom. Tenured faculty are being replaced with lower paid contingent faculty whose academic freedom is not protected by tenure. State and local public funding is being supplanted by contributions from corporate and private donors with specific agendas for University research, teaching and governance. Top administrators are being selected for their ability to raise money, not prior experience with higher education or understanding of the university environment. Finally, a corporate culture and command structure is supplanting procedures protecting the exercise of faculty voice, academic freedom, representation in administrative decision-making, and the free flow of information—all of which now are considered budgetary luxuries. The article concludes by describing actions faculty and staff have taken to stem the tide of these changes. [*Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: http://www.transformativestudies.org ©2010 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.*]

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