

October 30, 2020

Dear Chancellor Jeremy Haefner, Provost Mary Clark, Vice Chancellor Tom Romero, Faculty Senate President Sarah Pessin, and Dean Haluk Ogmen,

As Chair of the DU Computer Science Department and on behalf of our department, I am sending this letter which we wrote and approved this week:

We the faculty of the DU Computer Science Department support our Native Student Alliance and student BIPOC leaders and respectfully ask that you reconsider the decision to continue on with the "Pioneer" moniker. We agree that there are many positive attributes that can be ascribed to a pioneer, and we recognize the loyalty of alumni to that identity. However, we feel that given our institutional history coupled with the current long overdue reckoning with systemic racism and oppression, it is essential to move beyond our nostalgic view of pioneer days. We note that pioneer days were also a time of colonization and genocide of indigenous peoples.

Our discipline of computer science is in the midst of a historic time of automating many jobs and processes. Unfortunately these changes can result in our being complicit with the codification of past and current inequity hidden within software, and have a negative influence on our future. As recommended by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) computer science curricular guidelines, we strive to instill active, ethical, and inclusive thought in our students. This goal is closely aligned with the DU 4D student model. The term pioneer also carries a sense of "manifest destiny" and "act first, think later" that is emblematic of a mindset present and problematic within our discipline. Continuing on with the "Pioneer" as a university identity, a term that is perceived by many as a hurtful symbol of colonization and genocide compromises our ability to model responsible action. Failing to support our minoritized students will hurt our DEI efforts in a significant way. Social equity requires not only a more diverse workforce in computing, but also an active commitment to fairness, justice, and equality in the formulation of public policy. Thus, for the benefit of our society that is broadly impacted by products of the tech industry, we need to better support our minoritized students. For all of these reasons, we urge the University to continue its journey of owning our history and now move forward in a healing manner that includes dropping the identity of "Pioneer".

Sincerely,  
Chris GauthierDickey  
Chair of Computer Science