

February 17, 2023

Dear Chancellor Garcia,

We are writing to you on behalf of faculty members at Pueblo Community College (PCC) to submit an official notice of a majority Vote of No Confidence in PCC President, Dr. Patricia Erjavec. The vote passed Faculty Council 16-1 on February 2, 2023 and passed All-faculty 54-27-14 on February 16, 2023.

We arrived at this consensus after much discussion and reflection--and after many years of good faith efforts by staff and faculty to strengthen communication, to improve morale, and to have a positive impact on the college's decision-making processes. Staff* and faculty have exhausted every option available to us in an effort to partner with Dr. Erjavec to foster a healthy educational environment: we have invited her to meet with our committees; we've met with her privately; we've brought concerns to administrative meetings and to Human Resources; we've even created new collaborative spaces and communication strategies and welcomed her to participate—all in the interest of building bridges and working with her as part of a productive team of educators.

Unfortunately, Dr. Erjavec has rejected all of our proposals, and we have lost trust in her words and actions. As her leadership has deteriorated, so have the conditions of the college, dramatically impacting our ability to serve our students and the common good. Morale has plummeted, and talented educators and employees from every corner of the campus are seeking employment elsewhere.

We believe the following to be irreconcilable with the mission and values of Pueblo Community College:

1. Dr. Erjavec has established a pattern of pervasive hostility, retaliation, and interpersonal abuse with both faculty and staff.

- We understand that you are aware of a video recording of the March 3 Faculty Council meeting in which President Erjavec was falsely accusatory and aggressive with members of the Council. What must be clarified is that this incident is not an outlier. In fact, abusive language and intimidation are so frequent as to be a way of life at Pueblo Community College. Many of our colleagues report feeling so frightened of intimidation and retaliation that they avoid meetings when the president is involved.
- PCC's staff and faculty shared governance committee, HiPAC, hosted "Conversation Day" events in October of 2022 to solicit feedback on an administrative plan to revise institution-wide shared governance practices. Faculty and staff from multiple campus areas opted not to participate citing fear of retaliation. Similarly, many report being deeply concerned that they will lose their position and/or administrative support for their programs if they speak out against the President's ideas. When these concerns were expressed at a recent open Cabinet meeting discussing the new shared

**The contents of this letter have been drafted by and voted upon by faculty. While the experiences of our staff colleagues were considered, we understand that we do not speak on their behalf. We encourage them to voice their concerns in the avenues available to them.*

governance plan, they were dismissed as having no merit, and the President did not give assurances that responses would be protected.

- Dr. Erjavec's unprofessional behavior has shaped the culture of communication between administrators, faculty, and staff. Many employees across the institution and on multiple campuses describe PCC as a toxic, even hostile work environment. Many report crushing workloads that render them ineffective at their primary job responsibilities, generating fears of job loss or poor performance reviews that impact their pay as well as their potential. Some have made the difficult decision to step down from leadership roles, to cancel innovative projects, or to abandon new classroom strategies that could disturb the status quo for fear that any complaint from a student, parent, or even a colleague could be used against them.

2. Dr. Erjavec often relies on misleading, outdated and/or irrelevant data to justify insular decisions.

- In August of 2022 the president announced in multiple spaces that the System office was overwhelmed with calls from college employees and that Chancellor Garcia requested that college employees stop contacting the System directly. When we learned that this was not an accurate representation of conversations between Chancellor Garcia and the presidents and that employees were, in fact, still encouraged to reach out to the System for support, we addressed this privately with Dr. Erjavec. Though she agreed there was a miscommunication, she never assumed responsibility, and she never corrected the record at the college. It is likely that many staff still think that they cannot contact the system with concerns. This kind of misrepresentation of information coming from the System office is routine—and is used too often to avoid accountability for unpopular decisions. Recently, Dr. Erjavec presented FT/PT ratios across the system as part of her response to multiple requests to restore faculty positions, concluding that PCC invests more money into faculty than other colleges. It was a blatant distortion of the system's statistics, as it did not consider relevant contexts such as the proportion of FT/PT instructors with respect to the size of each college. We met with her privately and asked her to consider how she could use the data more responsibly, yet she elected to use these very same statistics to draw the very same conclusion the following semester.
- Dr. Erjavec has frequently ignored System Policy and PCC protocol for her own convenience. Recently, she attempted to override PCC's protocol on Shared Governance to eliminate the High Performing Advisory Council (HiPAC) as part of the new college plan for shared governance. This decision not only violated the protocol, but effectively silenced representatives from multiple campus groups affected by the decision and further called into question our trust in the president. The irony that the President's new plan for shared governance was created without inviting any existing shared governance bodies to the discussion was lost on her. When faculty reminded Dr. Erjavec that protocol doesn't allow the president to make this decision without going through the protocol process, she said that she would then push the decision through the emergency protocol process to expedite the implementation of her

decision. Faculty cautioned her that use of the emergency protocol process for this purpose would be a gross misuse of the protocol.

- Throughout Dr. Erjavec's tenure, faculty and staff have repeatedly and directly asked for greater budget transparency. Though she often claimed we simply "wouldn't understand it," we persisted, as we have been and continue to be eager to collaborate on decisions that affect the college. Dr. Erjavec eventually agreed to facilitate budget presentations and to arrange budget meetings between program chairs and the Chief Financial Officer. Unfortunately, the data provided by the CFO was often outdated or incomplete--and still we were never given an opportunity to see how each program serves the institution as a whole. Moreover, we discovered that faulty data had been used to justify decisions that had significant impact on programs, positions, and the campus culture.
- In January of 2023, Dr. Erjavec gave a speech to the entire college welcoming them back for the spring semester. More than 90% of her presentation was taken word-for-word from online sources, and she never announced this to the audience. In fact, she presented the ideas in her speech as her own, and the only reason any sources were referenced at all in the presentation is because her Marketing team did it for her, in an effort to uphold their own ethical standards. Even more shocking is that this kind of blatant plagiarism has been identified in previous instances, and Dr. Erjavec has taken no interest in clarifying that any borrowed ideas or words she has shared with the college belonged to other authors. Staff and faculty alike have found this fundamentally damaging. We understand that other presidents across the country have been removed or have resigned for less flagrant violations of plagiarism as it undermines the integrity of an institution of higher learning.

3. Dr. Erjavec has wholly and consistently rejected processes and strategies that would support effective shared governance at PCC.

- In August of 2022, Dr. Erjavec launched a new shared governance model (the "Champion" model) for the college that would dramatically minimize representation of faculty and staff in the college decision-making process. Though both staff and faculty delivered passionate pleas for administration to consider the harm this new model would cause, and though we offered to assign representatives from all campus groups to collaborate on a revised version of the model that would align with the vision of our Strategic Plan, she dismissed us and called the matter closed for discussion. We are deeply concerned that the Champion Model will prevent staff and faculty from contributing the important insights and experiences needed to make sound decisions that affect the college. Not only does this model remove our High Performance Advisory Council (HiPAC), a critical body that allows faculty and staff to collaborate on issues that affect multiple campus groups, but it also places emphasis on administrative champions to provide indirect representation for faculty and staff on important issues. The President identified the VPAS as the Champion who will represent faculty at the decision-making table. And though the VPAS has specifically asked that faculty not directly ever contact her via phone or email with concerns, the President continues to refer our concerns back to her. On multiple occasions, key

faculty members have been denied opportunities to provide input at meetings for their own programs and projects, and still President Erjavec relies on the VPAS to speak on behalf of multiple program areas with various needs.

- In November of 2022, the VPAS declined to support a proposal to use funds from the CCCS Teaching Excellence Grant to support faculty-driven pedagogical improvements and robust professional development opportunities because the funding had been secured for “reassigned time” for research and development, as well as stipends for faculty and instructors who completed trainings aimed to address equity and inclusion at PCC. The faculty members leading this project had been reporting broad and meaningful success across the institution and even caught the attention of the System office, who lauded their proposal as among the “most practical” they had reviewed. Faculty, therefore, appealed to Dr. Erjavec to defend this excellent work. Sadly, she did nothing. And in subsequent discussions, she eventually agreed with the VPAS that faculty should be carrying full teaching loads in lieu of leadership responsibilities. This philosophy is now trending with other administrators, who have been limiting their support for committee work, calling into question the worth of intellectual inquiry, continued growth, and educational excellence at PCC. The VPAS has also reinforced the President’s attitude of stay in your lane by insisting we should simply “trust the position.” So when we raise concerns about administrative decisions made without faculty input, we are easily dismissed, further limiting opportunities for faculty to participate in the decisions that affect them.
- PCC’s branch campus communities carry unique and varied needs; and their faculty and staff have long since requested opportunities to share their talents and insights at the decision-making table, specifically when those decisions impact student recruitment opportunities, learning needs, retention, and employee workloads at their campuses. Unfortunately, decisions are routinely delivered to them after they’ve been made by Dr. Erjavec and her Pueblo campus leadership team. Most disturbing is that these decisions often lack the strategic planning critical to their sustainability, leading to consequences that could have been avoided. Branch campus faculty and staff report feeling disrespected and demoralized, and the turnover rate for branch campus leadership further illustrates the unrest.
- During the Fall of 2022, the VPAS sought to transfer an academic program (First Year Experience/AAA1009) to the division of Student Services while refusing to hear input from anyone directly involved. As this decision was creating deep conflicts and concerns, the program’s faculty implored Dr. Erjavec for weeks to intervene. Instead, she continued to redirect them back to the VPAS and chose not to respond to emails. Defeated, the AAA program coordinator notified the college in December that she would have to step down as a result of the transfer. Staff and faculty from across the institution erupted with outrage, and Dr. Erjavec finally intervened, claiming it was a misunderstanding in a campus-wide email that stated that she was “not sure how the status of AAA 1009 has come into question, but please rest assured that no decision has been made.” This mischaracterization of the events gave Dr. Erjavec an opportunity to appear as if she held no responsibility for the harm that had been caused, when in fact she had been aware since the very beginning.

These are just a few of the many examples we have collected of the president distorting the truth publicly, making reckless decisions, and taking actions that compromise trust. Furthermore, the president's actions undermine Criterion 2 of our Strategic Plan, which states that PCC "ensures faculty, staff, and students adhere to fair and ethical behavior in the pursuit of academic freedom, intellectual inquiry, and operational excellence," as well as Criterion 5 of the Strategic Plan, which states that PCC's "leadership facilitates a transparent environment to evaluate operational effectiveness and stewardship in providing the framework for continuous improvement."

PCC's staff and faculty have a clear understanding of our responsibility to provide transformative experiences to our students and surrounding communities. We depend on trusting relationships with college leaders in order to fulfill that responsibility. Dr. Erjavec has been abusive, dishonest, and has dismissed all efforts to collaborate. We feel her oppressive tenure will continue to weaken employee morale on campus to the detriment of PCC and the students it serves.

We sincerely hope the System will take meaningful action to help PCC fulfill its mission and uphold its values.

Thank you for your consideration.