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A woman of valor, Noel enriched all of Denver

By The Denver Post

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When Rachel Bassette Noel was honored by the Anti-Defamation League in 2004, longtime ADL director Sheldon Steinhauser quoted from Chapter 31 of the Book of Proverbs to perfectly capture her spirit:

A woman of valor who can find? For her price is far above rubies. Many daughters have done valiantly but thou excellest them all.

Noel, who died Monday in Oakland, Calif., at age 90, fought valiantly all her life to

vanquish the bigotry and inequality she first encountered in the segregated South.

Moving to the West after World War II, she expected to find a better life. But she and her husband, Dr. Edmond F. Noel, found many of the same prejudices entrenched in Denver that she had encountered in her native Hampton, Va.

Edmond Noel was the first African-American surgeon in Colorado but was refused operating room privileges in every city hospital except the Jewish hospital then known as General Rose, now Rose Medical Center. Rose had been founded at a time when Jewish doctors were also denied privileges in other city hospitals. He died in 1986.

Rachel Noel had received a master's degree in sociology from Fisk University but also found many doors closed to her in Denver before taking a job with the Denver Human Rights Commission.

Elected to the Denver School Board in 1965, she later introduced a resolution calling for a comprehensive school integration plan. After much community opposition, it passed in 1970.

In 1973, a U.S. Supreme Court decision led to mandatory desegregation of Denver's public schools, including busing for racial balance.

Noel's resolution and the subsequent desegregation efforts weren't always popular. In particular, Hispanic families feared that having their children bused to other neighborhoods would undercut the community control and bilingual education programs they saw as important for their own children. After federal court supervision of Denver's desegregation plan ended in 1995, the district sought and continues to use means other than mandatory busing to improve educational opportunities for all its children.

But the simple fact is that until Rachel Noel stood up and valiantly called for change, Denver had a long and shameful history of denying equality and opportunity to children of color. After her statement of conscience, the school district and the citizenry at large would debate the best *means* for achieving equality and opportunity for all its students — but that *goal* itself would never again be called into question.

Rachel Noel was indeed a woman of valor and her legacy enriched us all.

Letters to the Editor

Is Bruce Benson right for CU?

Bruce Benson is an excellent choice to lead the University of Colorado. Based on the firsthand observations of this Democrat, concerns about his ability to set aside partisan politics are unfounded. As the leader of the Denver Public Schools Foundation and in his work on Gov. Bill Ritter's P-20 Commission, Bruce has demonstrated an absolute commitment toward improving education with no political agenda. Working with

Democrats and Republicans alike, Bruce transformed the DPS Foundation from a sleepy institution into a stellar fundraiser, supporting numerous important public education programs. His only concern has been how to help serve more kids and how to improve the foundation. His fundraising prowess and commitment to excellence in education would serve CU well.

Bruce Hoyt, *Denver*

The writer is a member of the Denver Public Schools Board of Education.

Schools are being outsourced to business

Bruce Benson, the wannabe politician and Republican financier who funded the Trailhead Group, is the sole finalist to run our state's flagship university. Once a position for educators and scholars, it now seems to be transitioning to a business spin, ala Michael Bennet of Denver Public Schools. The trend in our expectation of standard public entitlements like roads, government services, and now education is to turn it over to business to run, as if they will provide a better service and less cost. If you believe that, try outsourcing your police and fire protection to the lowest bidder.

Keith Francis, Morrison

Rocky Mountain News

Thursday, February 7, 2008

No charges for ex-Denver principal accused of inappropriate touching

By [Hector Gutierrez](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/hector-gutierrez/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/hector-gutierrez/>> ,
Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/hector-gutierrez/contact/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/hector-gutierrez/contact/>>)

A former high school principal will not face criminal charges after being accused by a student of inappropriate touching, the Denver district attorney said Wednesday.

Police spokesman Sonny Jackson said detectives finished an investigation of the accusations against Dave Debus and turned it over to the district attorney.

Prosecutors declined to prosecute Debus, the former principal at Denver's Contemporary Learning Academy alternative high school in Jefferson Park.

"We did review the case involving allegations against the school employee and

our review found no criminal conduct, so we declined to file criminal charges," said Lynn Kimbrough, the district attorney's spokeswoman.

Denver Public Schools received a notice of intent to sue from the male student and his family in December concerning the allegations against Debus. The notice stated that Debus inappropriately and repeatedly touched the student at the alternative high school in November 2007.

The student also accused Debus of ordering him to appear in his office on a day the school was closed to students. A staff member questioned the boy's presence at the school that day and became concerned, the notice said.

Debus resigned from DPS in December. He could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Debus spent many years with the district as an elementary school teacher, an elementary and middle school principal, a superintendent for DPS' northwest area, and the principal at Contemporary Living Academy.

Wednesday, February 6, 2008

Speakout

Benson's passion a big plus for CU

Michael Bennet, Elaine Gantz Berman, David Ethan Greenberg

Wednesday, February 6, 2008

It is not an exaggeration to say Colorado's future rests heavily on the ability of the University of Colorado to continue as a world-class educational system. It's not just important for the hundreds of thousands of Colorado families who will be sending their children to CU in the coming decades; it's crucial to Colorado's ability to compete in a global environment where intellectual capital will more and more be the currency of the realm. No institution in this state, public or private, conducts more research and development and incubates more business start-ups than CU.

And it's also not an exaggeration to say that the continued leadership of the University of Colorado system within the global academic community is in question. The system receives \$800 million per year less in public funding than its peer institutions across the nation, and its best faculty are being aggressively recruited by universities around the world offering greater resources and opportunities.

Meanwhile, the costs of delivering quality education continue to rise.

That's why the writers of this essay, none of whom supported Bruce Benson's candidacy for governor in 1994, are now enthusiastically supporting his candidacy for president of the University of Colorado system.

And when it comes to public education in Colorado, at all levels, few have walked the walk more than Benson. Despite his enthusiasm for all things Republican, when it comes to helping poor kids get an opportunity to learn, Benson will join forces with anyone who shares his passion. As the chairman of the Denver Public Schools Foundation, as the driving force behind the passage of the Denver Public Schools Bond Election in 2003 and the ProComp mill levy election in 2005, and as an advocate for early childhood education, he has been indispensable in creating widespread community support for the Denver Public Schools system.

Benson's support for higher education, and most especially for CU, follows the same pattern. As chairman of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, he was a tireless advocate for more state investment and better accountability for Colorado's state-funded colleges and universities.

He fought to turn Metro State into an independently managed school, so that it could better interact with the Denver community and become a leader in its field, and has co-chaired Blue Ribbon commissions for both Republican and Democratic governors.

When it comes to CU, he has put both his money and his political career on the line.

He donated \$8 million to the geology program at CU-Boulder and chaired the largest fundraising campaign in CU's history. As it became increasingly clear that the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights was strangling public education's ability to survive, he broke with the prevailing sentiment that dominated his political base and led the fight to pass Referendum C, giving higher education a financial stay of execution so the state can figure out a long-term strategy to help the CU system, and all other state colleges and universities, to thrive in the 21st century. That took guts and a commitment to something higher than partisan politics.

Benson has pledged to leave his partisanship at the door when he succeeds Hank Brown, and there is no reason not to take him at his word.

There was a time when university system leaders were evaluated on the basis of their academic credentials and scholarship. Today, university system leaders need to be evaluated on the basis of their ability to obtain for the university the resources and systems needed for their students to flourish, and their faculty to accomplish great things. It calls for a mixture of pragmatism and passion. Those of us who have worked with Bruce Benson and fought side by side for public education, know that's what he'll provide.

Michael Bennet is the superintendent of Denver Public Schools. Elaine Gantz Berman is a member of the State Board of Education. Cole Finegan, managing partner and Hogan & Hartson, is a former Denver City Attorney. David Ethan Greenberg is the founder of The Denver School of Science and Technology.