



Dear CSUSM community,

The weeks between spring break and commencement always seem to go by too quickly. I hope you have had an opportunity to take time for self-care – or will be able to take some time for rest or mindfulness in the days ahead.

Last March all our lives changed with the onset of the COVID-19. Since then, the interconnected pandemics have unmasked and amplified vast inequities and injustices along economic, racial and ethnic lines. From the tragedy in Atlanta just a few weeks ago to the ongoing killing of Black individuals, many of you have shared your pain, grief and desire for real change. Today, I wanted to take a moment to share an update with you related to our shared commitments and ongoing work related to inclusive excellence.

To reduce inequities on our campus, we are looking at how we can further support the academic success of our most marginalized student communities. [As President Neufeldt shared in her recent message](#), an Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) Student Experience Workgroup is being formed to look at the challenges facing APIDA student success and make recommendations for tailored support and belonging, including a center. The APIDA Faculty Staff Association also recently launched a new [online hub of informative and educational resources](#) that specifically addresses anti-Asian racism and cultural awareness. And, as a reminder, I hope you will be able to attend the April 15 event “From Yellow Peril to COVID-19.” To learn more and register, visit: <https://bit.ly/csusmapril15>.

For our Black students, Student Affairs developed a Black Student Success Initiative focused on creating community on campus and off, with a strong academic focus and holistic approach that will support higher retention and graduation rates. This program launched this spring.

In order to reach beyond our campus boundaries and into our broader community, Community Relations and University Engagement, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs are also partnering to connect with Black churches in our region to explore deeper relationships with the Black community. We have committed to regional leaders that we will continue listening and learning about the needs of our region, and deeply engage in authentic and supportive relationships with our external Black community.

Following last fall’s presentation by Drs. Sharon Elise, Lori Walkington and Mohamed Abumaye featuring the results of a research study on the Black Experience at CSUSM, we are organizing a second lecture in the series. This next lecture will feature Dr. Joely Proudfit presenting her findings on the impact of COVID-19 on our American Indian and Alaskan Native students.

As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, we have many programs and services that support our Latinx student community; but barriers to access and success continue to persist and these must be addressed. To that end, a Latinx student experience workgroup will be formed to assess gaps and make recommendations to improve belonging and student success. This group will form and begin its work in the fall.

Furthermore, many of our Student Academic Support Services – such as our DREAMer Resource Office (DRO), Pathways to Academic Success & Opportunities (PASO) and TRIO Student Support Services programs – are serving more students than ever before and resources, both space and funding, are needed. Fortunately, space has been designated by Student Affairs leadership for the DRO to expand when we can return to campus in person. In addition, funding has been identified to support DRO’s operational budget (which is currently funded entirely by grants), and hire an assistant director and peer mentors.

I’m also pleased to share that a newly imagined [Inclusive Excellence Advisory Council](#) was formed and charged this spring. This council, composed of students and employees representing various campus identity organizations and associations including the Jewish Faculty Staff Association, LGBTQA Faculty Staff Association, Veterans Center, Project Rebound, Disability Support Services and Gender Equity Center, will meet regularly with President Neufeldt throughout the academic year, ensuring that campus dialogue and decisions are rooted in our shared values of inclusive excellence.

In addition, many of the action steps that President Neufeldt committed to last August are underway. Progress updates are available on the [Office of the President website](#). Among those updates, I’m pleased to share that our Campus Climate Survey is underway. This data will help identify and measure how well we are doing in creating an inclusive and welcoming campus environment where all campus members thrive and are heard. It will also inform ongoing steps to address gaps and concerns.

Finally, as co-chair of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, I want to thank you for all your input and participation via town hall forums, world café conversations and the survey. Our shared values of inclusive excellence will be woven throughout the plan so that all members of our campus community – in all our rich diversity of identity and background – are reflected in our shared future.

All these steps and actions – and so many more not highlighted today – represent the hard work and commitment of many who are striving for a CSUSM that gives everyone a voice, everyone an opportunity to succeed, and everyone an opportunity to create a more just and equitable university. Be assured that this is not all we will do – with sincere intentionality we will continue to work together for a more just, equitable and humane campus community. I know our efforts are already having a transformative ripple effect not only on our university and our region, but on our world.

Sincerely,

Ranjeeta Basu
Interim Chief Diversity Officer

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