



Dear CSUSM Faculty and Staff,

As we look toward fall semester and what's ahead, I am writing to share updates related to the organization of the Office of the President. These changes are inspired by my Listening and Learning Tour as well as recommendations from workgroups that have convened over the past year.

This spring, I shared with you the formation of [University Cabinet](#), a cross-representational group that I consult with for recommendations and diverse perspectives on campus matters. This summer we have discussed topics ranging from the budget to enrollment to anti-racism actions and next steps – and I've been so appreciative of the Cabinet's candid reflections, questions and input.

Another leadership group that may be familiar to many of you is Executive Council (EC), which consists of the vice presidents and myself. Moving forward, the group will evolve to the President's Administrative Team (PAT) and will include all my senior-level direct reports, including vice presidents and others that I mention below, to discuss administrative matters.

Looking further at the organizational structure of our university and the Office of the President, I have come to understand that there are several functions at our campus that are currently siloed within divisions but are critical to the work of many across our university. This became clear in reviewing the recommendations from the [Inclusive Excellence Workgroup 1](#), which looked at the staffing and resources of the Office of Inclusive Excellence. Through their research, they found that the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) position not only needs a seat at the leadership table, but they also must work horizontally across the campus to better guide all of us in our work toward a more inclusive and socially just university.

It is in the spirit of these recommendations – which highlight the need for the CDO to be empowered to work collaboratively and across divisional boundaries – that I share with you three key areas that will come together in the Office of the President to ensure their work transcends across the campus. Those areas are the Office of Inclusive Excellence, the division of Community Engagement and the Office of Communications.

Chief Diversity Officer & Office of Inclusive Excellence

Last fall, Drs. Patricia Prado-Olmos and Marisol Clark-Ibáñez formed and oversaw three workgroups to guide our work in moving inclusive excellence forward. I am grateful for their leadership and for all those who contributed to the recommendations thus far.

With the recommendations of Inclusive Excellence Workgroup 1, I will launch a national search for our next CDO, who will report directly to me as an MPP Administrator IV, the same level as a vice president but without the divisional fences of a vice president so as not to limit their work and influence.

While this search is underway, Dr. Ranjeeta Basu will serve as interim CDO. Most recently serving as our interim provost and vice president of academic affairs, Dr. Basu has been a tremendous advocate for social justice on our campus over the years.

Many of you have gotten to know John Rawlins III, director of the Black Student Center, and have participated in many of the events or conversations he has led since he joined CSUSM a year ago. John has agreed to provide additional support to OIE during this time of transition. In addition, there is more evolution and expansion to come as laid out in the [workgroup report](#).

Ranjeeta and John will join Ariel Stevenson and Marilyn McWilliams in the Office of Inclusive Excellence who continue to work tirelessly to assist, advise, advocate and be resources for our students, faculty and staff. I can't thank them enough for all they do for CSUSM. I also want to thank Dr. Prado-Olmos for providing invaluable support to me during my first year as president in the role as the Special Advisor for Inclusive Excellence.

Community Engagement

Over the last year, I've come to know that we are a university with an uncommon understanding of our mission and importance to our external community. When it was established in 2011, creating a division around our commitment to community engagement was a bold statement. We were one of the first in the nation to earn the Carnegie Classification and we helped shape how Carnegie has defined this work – an impressive feat.

I've also come to understand the unique nature and history of our division of Community Engagement, along with the myriad ways that we as a campus are integrated into the community in our colleges, via various units of Student Affairs, in the work of University Advancement and so much more.

Because community engagement spans our campus and relies on the work of so many, I am bringing Community Engagement into the Office of the President. Particularly now, as we prepare our students for active citizenship in a society that is reckoning with its history of systemic racism, Community Engagement is a key partner in the work in which we now must more deeply engage.

Dr. Prado-Olmos has been devoted to defining and growing the division of Community Engagement since becoming vice president in 2015. She plays such an important role in bridging our campus to our region, and our region to our campus – which is why I am grateful that she will continue to serve in the Office of the President as our Chief Community Engagement Officer (CCEO).

University Communications

I heard on my listening and learning tour how important it is that we elevate our institutional reputation in the media and to the public. Therefore, I am pleased to share with you that the Office of Communications, currently residing in University Advancement, will become University Communications in the Office of the President. Under the direction of Chief Communications Officer (CCO) Margaret Chantung, University Communications' goal will be to help coalesce and focus university-wide communications around core messages to create clarity, consistency and a sharpened organizational identity.

Working together with Student Affairs, University Communications will broaden its scope to support more student-focused communications across the student life cycle. And, given rapid technological advances affecting the way we receive and consume information – even more so now that we are working, learning and socializing primarily online – University Communications will work closely with IITS to better leverage our digital communications platforms and tools across our departments. Furthermore, the office will continue to work to share our unique vision and mission with our internal and external stakeholders as we work together to vision the next 30 years.

Strategic Planning to Kick Off this Fall

And speaking of the next 30 years, I am pleased to share with you that we will officially kick off a university-wide strategic planning process this fall, involving all members of our university who would like to participate in defining our new vision, mission and priorities as we look to the future. Due to COVID-19, I initially thought this process might be delayed. But given the ongoing nature of the pandemic and the fact that it is bringing unique challenges and changes that we will likely be reckoning with for years to come, I believe that it is essential that we move forward with charting our future direction.

In summary, reporting directly to me will be the CDO, CCEO, CCO, and Chief of Staff, Sarah Villarreal. They will be at the table in both the University Cabinet and PAT, working to streamline and align our work horizontally across the university related to inclusive excellence, community engagement and communications. Also important to note, these changes will bring an overall cost savings of over \$700,000 through operational efficiencies and realignment of some staff roles and talents.

As president of CSUSM, I see myself first and foremost as our university's top diversity officer, our top community engagement officer and our top communications officer. This means that wherever I go and in all that I do, I am working to champion our values of inclusive excellence, to engage our campus with our region as a steward of place, and to tell all the impactful stories of our students, faculty and staff. These three roles are integral to who I am as a leader as we work collectively and innovatively to plan an exciting future for our next 30 years. Despite the challenging times we find ourselves in, I very much look forward to the work ahead with you. Don't forget to save the date for Convocation on Aug. 27, when we kick off another exciting year.

Sincerely,

Ellen Neufeldt
President

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