



Dear CSUSM community,

On Saturday, we will observe the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Many of us vividly remember that day. At the time, I was working at the University Tennessee at Chattanooga.

News moved slower back then by today's standards, and I remember how information unfolded over that morning. Before the second plane hitting, there was confusion over what was happening. But the second strike made it clear that this was an act of terrorism on a scale not seen before on American soil. With that realization – along with information of the third plane that was flown into the Pentagon and a fourth plane that crashed in a Pennsylvania field – the world as we knew it was forever changed. I spent the rest of that day meeting and talking with students alongside our then-Chancellor Bill Stacy (coincidentally, Dr. Stacy was CSUSM's first president), acknowledging their trauma and fear, while also assuring them that our university would continue to welcome and support scholars of all backgrounds, cultures and religions.

Today, many of our students are too young to remember Sept. 11, 2001 (or weren't even born yet); but for others, it is a date that will be engrained in us as a flashbulb memory for the rest of our lives. We will always remember where we were when we first heard the news, and our shock and disbelief at the magnitude of the events unfolding before us.

In fact, just today, I attended the 9/11 Day of Remembrance event at the Epstein Family Veterans Center, co-hosted by Veterans Services and the Department of Service Learning and Civic Engagement. At the event, [student veteran Armando Manzo](#) shared how he was personally affected by the attack. Although he was only 16 years old at the time, he made a pact with three of his cousins to join the military once they graduated high school. Armando served 10 years in the Marine Corps, which included a deployment to Afghanistan. Now a business student here at CSUSM, Armando's goal is to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs or a nonprofit that supports the veteran community.

Listening to UPD Officer McClintock and City of San Marcos Fire Captain Thompson's memories and stories of impact at today's event also reminded me that we cannot forget the stories of bravery from the public servants, emergency workers and every-day bystander heroes who responded that day to organize relief and rescue efforts, sacrificing themselves to save others. Nor can we lose sight of the profound human cost of the following Afghanistan and Iraq wars – or the ongoing fear and concern so many have for friends and loved ones still overseas in Afghanistan. Last month's loss of 13 service members and more than 150 Afghan men, women and children during an attack at the Kabul airport was another significant tragedy, impacting so many of us here at CSUSM and in our region.

As we reflect on the anniversary of 9/11 and all that it has come to mean over these last 20 years, let us pay tribute to the thousands of victims and their families, the emergency workers/first responders, and the innumerable Americans and allies who served our country at home and abroad. As we do so, may we rededicate ourselves to our efforts to understand one another, bridge differences, and promote cross-cultural awareness, bringing healing and unity to our campus, our region and our world.

As we come together in observance, you or someone you know may need or want support. Please know that the following resources are available:

- [Veterans Services](#) is here to support our student veterans and military-connected students;
- Counselors and grief support is available through [Student Health & Counseling Services](#);
- The [Cougar Care Network](#) can connect you with resources on and off campus. You can also refer a friend, colleague or classmate who may need extra support;
- Counseling and crisis support is available for faculty and staff through the [Employee Assistance Program](#);
- Joining together in community can help us process what we're feeling and experiencing. Students can find that community within our [Student Life Centers for Identity, Inclusion and Empowerment](#). [FACES](#) (for faculty) and the [Staff Center](#) (for staff) are also great places to make meaningful connections and support each other.

Finally, I invite you to visit the [Service Learning & Civic Engagement online Action Hub](#), organized by Director Rochelle Smarr, which provides opportunities for civic engagement in tribute and remembrance of 9/11. Together, we can help continue the healing and be the change our world needs.

Sincerely,

Ellen Neufeldt

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