



Thursday, March 26, 2020

Dear CSUSM Faculty & Staff,

Less than a week into CSUSM's move to fully virtual courses and services, I wanted to reach out to express my gratitude. I am so impressed by the way you, in a matter of just days, came together to respond and transition our campus.

I know these times are not easy. The COVID-19 situation is constantly evolving, and every day brings an extraordinary amount of news and information. It can sometimes feel overwhelming and it's OK to feel uncertain or worried. While none of us have all the answers, what I know to be absolute is that we can count on one another.

As a university, we must move forward as proactively as possible with the information we do have. To that end, I want you to be aware that the California State University system issued a memo this week asking all campuses to impose a significant slowdown in our hiring practices, effective immediately and until further notice.

This decision was made out of an abundance of caution for the future financial well-being of our campuses and in response to the evolving challenges related to COVID-19. While this may come as a disappointment – and I can't deny that all our open positions are important – this decision does allow us the opportunity to pause until we see what the greater fiscal impact of COVID-19 will be on our economy.

We will continue with our search for a provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. In addition, our vice presidents are reviewing all other open positions university-wide to determine if there are any other searches that must move forward at this time.

Given preliminary economic projections for our national economy, it is critical that we are even more thoughtful and prudent about immediate decisions that will have a fiscal impact – not just in hiring but in all that we do. But I want you to know that I continue to be very optimistic about our ability to not only survive but thrive through this crisis. We will absolutely move forward with optimism and a healthy dose of prudence while maintaining our commitment to our people, our mission and our values.

In fact, reflecting on our people, our mission and our values is what centers me. When I reflect on the amazing examples of teamwork, compassion and resilience that you have demonstrated, I am so proud.

For example:

- Our ASI leaders are ensuring that our mobile Cougar Pantry is stocked and open to our students.
- Our dedicated faculty are maintaining essential connections with our students and have gone the extra mile to continue to teach virtually.
- IITS staff mobilized quickly to ensure technology and resources got in the hands of those who needed it.
- Our facilities, custodial, and safety and health teams are working to maintain a safe and clean campus environment.
- Housing staff and resident advisors worked countless hours to support hundreds of housing students as they moved out this past week.
- And so many others – far too many to name – from UPD, to the library, to student affairs, academic affairs, communications, finance and beyond who are continuing to lead from where they are.

I've also been receiving so many thoughtful messages bringing forward innovative ideas and suggestions for what we can do to better serve our community. Some of you have also asked how you might be able to lend a hand. Together, you are demonstrating – not just to me but to the world – that Cal State San Marcos is a unified campus, focused first and foremost on our students and their success. We are truly in this together.

Over the last year, I have seen so many examples of our collective pioneering and innovative spirit. I'm certain that in this historic moment, we will rise to the challenges ahead of us.

Sincerely,

Ellen Neufeldt  
President

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