



Dear CSUSM Community,

This summer has been a time of pain, anguish, reflection and longing for impactful action as we grapple with the "pandemic within a pandemic" – the interrelated crises of racism and inequity that has converged within the crisis of COVID-19. Today, I'd like to share with you a few updates on steps we are taking now, and where we hope to go next as we collectively work to confront and address anti-Black racism and systemic racism at our university.

Since the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, many Black faculty, students, staff and administrators have openly and bravely shared with me their experiences as well as their exasperation. I'm so appreciative of the time that people took to talk with me and educate me. Once again, they stepped up and gave their time and energy – and I don't want it to go to waste. I recognize that many members of our Black community are tired and traumatized from having to recount their experiences time and time again. I hear you, I believe you, and I thank you.

I also want to thank the many individuals at every level, including Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators, who have engaged in thoughtful conversations about confronting and responding to the racial brokenness and systemic injustice in our world and on our campus. There has been good work underway for many years thanks to both the formal and informal leadership of many across campus who have long championed educational equity and inclusive excellence, leading to concrete actions. But there is much more to do, especially in addressing anti-Blackness and racism on our campus. Many ideas for further action have come forward that tie into the Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Strategic Plan, the Office of Inclusive Excellence (OIE) and the work of other groups across campus.

Below are several steps many across our campus are taking now to target the removal of systemic barriers and build a more inclusive university community for our students, faculty, staff and greater community. A longer summary of these actions can be found on the [Office of the President website](#).

- **Study on the CSUSM Black Experience** - Dr. Sharon Elise is leading a study with fellow Black faculty on the CSUSM Black experience, which will be shared this fall and posted on the OIE website.
- **Supporting Black Student Success** - Student Affairs is developing a program focused on creating community for Black students on campus and off, with a strong academic focus and holistic approach that will support higher retention and graduation rates.
- **Black Allyship Workshop** - A Black Allyship Workshop training is in the final stages of development by Student Affairs. It will be piloted this fall with a full launch in the spring.
- **Innovating the Future of the University Police Department** - Acknowledging the national call for transformational change to public safety, two UPD-related groups are moving forward: The UPD Community Engagement group and the Task Force on Innovative Policing.
- **Climate Survey** - To better understand the steps we need to take to make our campus a welcoming and productive environment for everyone, this academic year we will administer a climate survey with peer benchmarking. We will also continue to administer and share the biannual [diverse learning environment survey](#) to students. The Black Student Center is also currently working to survey Black students about their experience with student life on campus from a cultural perspective.
- **Faculty Center Report Regarding Experiences of Faculty of Color** - I am supportive of many of the recommendations included in the report, including cluster hiring of faculty of color, improving hiring processes for lecturer hires, revising the Retention, Tenure and Promotion (RTP) process and more. I have asked Provost Kemnitz to work with Academic Senate and college deans to explore next steps.
- **Supporting Black Staff and Administrators** - Office of Inclusive Excellence Assistant Director Ariel Stevenson and AVP for Faculty Affairs Michelle Hunt brought forward several great suggestions related to career progression, retention and support. In conjunction with our interim AVP for Human Resources and Payroll Services Kent Porter, I've asked them to continue conversations and recommend next steps.
- **Reviewing University Policies** - We will begin to identify and change exclusionary or biased university policies and administrative practices that lead to and maintain inequity and deny opportunity.
- **Coordinating Care and Support for Faculty and Staff** - This fall, FACES and the new Staff Center will launch - each guided by advisory committees - to provide non-clinical case management services and care coordination to better care for our faculty and staff.
- **University Cabinet Commitment** - Dr. Tumay Tunur and Dr. Sharon Elise facilitated a conversation with the [University Cabinet](#) in July. In addition, the Cabinet viewed the webinar, [Addressing Anti-Blackness on Campus: Implications for Educators and Institutions](#), which will serve as a framework for ongoing conversations.
- **Chief Diversity Officer Next Steps** - [Office of Inclusive Excellence Workgroup 1](#) provided me their report on staffing and resources for OIE earlier this summer. I am in the final stages of reviewing and consulting with shared governance groups and key campus stakeholders and I look forward to announcing next steps shortly.

The steps we are taking represent many but not all the initiatives that we will be implementing. This work will continue to evolve and grow. The Office of Inclusive Excellence will map and track the work that is taking place across campus, and we will continue to share regular updates.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the inequitable burdens of intellectual and emotional labor place on Black, Indigenous, and people of color within our campus community. Antiracism work must be ALL our work. Even during these challenging times, may we be united in our resolve to stay engaged, stand together, and honor the values that make CSUSM so special. Thank you for learning and growing with me on this journey.

If you have ideas or would like to participate in our antiracism efforts, please email me at pres@csusm.edu.

Sincerely,

Ellen Neufeldt
President

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