



Monday, April 6, 2020

Dear Faculty and Staff,

It's hard to believe that we are now in the first week of April. I know many of you will agree with me that March was a surreal month – nothing like we've ever experienced before. As we welcome back our students and faculty to the last six weeks of our spring semester, I wanted to provide a few timely updates and positive news about how we, as a campus community, are moving forward.

#### Summer Classes and Events

First, I want to share with you that while we don't yet know when COVID-19 stay-at-home orders will be lifted, we must move forward with planning for the future with the best information we have available at this time. Thus, based on guidance from the Chancellor's Office, we will move our entire summer course schedule for both sessions to virtual instruction. In addition, plans for in-person events through June will be hosted in virtual format or rescheduled for another time in the future.

As Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases recently noted, "the virus makes the timeline." If conditions change and guidance allows us to return to campus in late summer, we may be able to nimbly move forward with some on-campus events. However, we will have to take this situation day-by-day. But please know, I look forward with great anticipation to the day we will reunite on campus again!

#### Student Relief Fund

What has brought me great joy these last few weeks is seeing all the ways that we have come together even from our socially-distanced locations.

Last week, Associated Students, Inc., Student Affairs and University Advancement quickly collaborated on the creation of a new **Student Relief Fund**. In the span of just a few hours, it raised nearly \$20,000 to support our students with funds for tuition, fees and books. As of this morning, the fund received over 100 gifts, totaling more than \$58,000.

On Thursday, two generous donors offered an additional \$25,000 challenge grant that we expect to meet early this week. I am so grateful for the support of all our generous donors who are helping ensure that COVID-19 related financial burdens don't deter our students from achieving their academic goals!

We look forward to sharing more information in the coming days.

#### More Positive News and Gratitude

I know that so many of us are experiencing worry and anxiety over what the future holds. What I've learned thanks to our interim provost's [expertise on mindfulness](#), is that it's so important to be present in this moment and project gratitude for the positivity, kindness and acts of everyday heroism that surround us.

I don't have to look far to find those examples:

- Last week, our Safety and Health team helped coordinate the delivery of essential supplies to regional hospitals. We were able to donate four ventilators, over 40,000 pairs of gloves, nearly 1,000 N-95 masks, as well as hundreds of face shields, surgical and procedure face masks and other critical medical supplies.
- Starting on April 7, Tumay Tunur, assistant professor of kinesiology, volunteered to offer twice-a-week **virtual salsa lessons** to our faculty and staff in partnership with the Faculty Center. I love these instances of individuals creatively offering their skills and expertise to offer a mental health/self-care break and an opportunity to have some light-hearted fun!
- The Alumni Association shared with me that one of our alumni, Michelle Harvey (Business '02), was so moved by the shortage of masks in hospitals that she founded the San Diego Face Mask Sewing Group on Facebook, which has already attracted 700 members and donated hundreds of face masks to front-line health workers.
- And there are hundreds of examples of staff who are going above and beyond to serve our students. Just one of those examples is Library Services Specialist Kelly Ann Sam, who packed up all of the physical reserve textbooks (12 boxes in all) to bring home with her and digitize so that students would continue to have access to course materials.

This great work inspired me to launch a new hashtag, **#CSUSMgratitude** – and I hope you will join me in sharing more CSUSM examples of positivity, caring, innovation and generosity on your social media platform of choice (mine is Twitter! [@ellenneufeldt](#)).

Thank you again for all that you are doing. I know the effort has been herculean and much is asked of us. You have already shown how well CSUSM rises to the challenge and I can't thank you enough.

Sincerely,

Ellen Neufeldt

President

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