

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

Remarks as Prepared
President Ellen Neufeldt
Feb. 6, 2020

- Good morning!
- Thank you, Frank for that wonderful opening.
- Thank you, Dr. Sharon Hamill and Michelle Tran, for your warm welcome.
- And it was so meaningful to me to hear from Raye – we met for the first time at the Gentlemen’s Gourmet in October. I was so struck by her enthusiasm for Cal State San Marcos.
- I also want to thank Malin – he hosted an event for me at the San Diego Yacht Club last fall, introducing me to many of our region’s community leaders.
- Malin truly exemplifies the value of “community before self” and I can’t thank him enough for all that he has done for me personally as well as our university.
- Trustee Adam Day – I admire your leadership in the CSU. Your ongoing support of Cal State San Marcos and our region is truly exemplary.
- I will never forget that Adam took the time early on in my presidency to have lunch with me on campus.
- He offered so many great perspectives and advice, and I can’t thank him enough.
- I stand before you today with enormous gratitude to be a part of a university that is so well supported by and connected to its community and region.
- Thank you all for being here this morning.

LISTENING & LEARNING

- Last summer began one of the most exciting journeys of my life.
- In the span of just a few months I accepted a new position, moved from Virginia to California, and – on July 1 – started my first day as president of Cal State San Marcos.
- In this short time, I have done a lot of listening and learning – and several questions have come up over and over.
- One of the most frequent is, “What’s been the biggest change?” Well, for me, I’m still getting used to the fact that when you wake up, the news has already happened!
- But I have to tell you that adapting to the San Diego climate has been wonderful!
- I was just at Humboldt State a few weeks ago and I realized just how quickly I’ve gotten spoiled by this weather.
- Another question I’ve been asked is, “What’s my vision for the future of our university?”
- While I came with some initial ideas, any vision for our university should – and will be – a shared one.
- And I’ll get back to my thoughts on that later.
- But first, I embarked on a Listening & Learning Tour to find out about what makes us so distinctive ... as well as to learn where our challenges and opportunities lay.

- Since July, I have met with hundreds of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members and leaders.
- I have such gratitude for all of you as I have experienced such an extraordinarily warm welcome ... and I want to tell you a little bit about where I've been.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- I must thank our Innovate 78 city partners.
- I understand that Cal State San Marcos has enjoyed decades of mutually beneficial partnerships as we've worked together and grown up alongside one another.
- Rebecca Jones, Mayor of San Marcos, took time during my very first week to meet with me – congratulations again for receiving our Community Partner of the Year award along with North City!
- Early on I also connected our other regional mayors, including Matt Hall from Carlsbad.
- Matt, I really enjoyed attending the Carlsbad “State of the Community” address – what a beautiful city.
- Cal State Trustee Jack McGrory introduced me to Supervisor Jim Desmond.
- Jim, I have a new appreciation for your long-standing leadership for our region.
- I also learned a lot about the San Diego North Economic Development Council, so dedicated to building a stronger North County economy.
- And I learned that we have also enjoyed a long-standing partnership with the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation – I'm so grateful to CEO Mark Cafferty for the invitation to sit on the board.

- Our region's higher ed leadership hosted a special regional presidents' lunch, providing me an opportunity to meet many of our higher education partners, including UCSD Chancellor Pradeep Khosla, who was so kind to host a reception for me at his home.
- In January, I attended the San Diego and Imperial Counties Community College Association and was impressed by the commitment of our Community College partners to expand access and seamless pathways to students.
- Dr. Sunni Cooke, president of MiraCosta College, invited me to tea and has offered such great advice and support. Sunni – I'm so grateful for the warm welcome.
- And I'm also grateful to Dr. Roger Shultz, Superintendent and President of Mt. San Jacinto Community College, for his ongoing partnership – we recently met while I was touring CSUSM at Temecula.
- Speaking of Temecula, I want to acknowledge Mayor Pro-Tem Maryann Edwards.
- I had a chance to visit Temecula City Hall and am proud of the ways CSUSM has collaborated over the years to serve Southwest Riverside County.
- I'm proud that Cal State San Marcos is located on the ancestral homelands of American Indian tribes that have inhabited and cared for this land for centuries.
- I met many leaders from our tribal communities at the Tribal Education Summit here on campus last fall and was so pleased to learn about all the ways we are partnering together to improve college attendance and graduation rates for American Indian students.
- I must acknowledge some of our greatest and most generous friends, including Jack and Caroline Raymond.

- Jack, you have been a titan of philanthropy over the years, leading the way for our philanthropic success, which makes such a difference in the lives of our students.
- Jack, I'm grateful to you for welcoming me so warmly.
- I also must thank Maj. Gen Tony Jackson, current chair of the CSUSM Foundation Board.
- In fact, Tony and Jack both served on my search committee ... and I've got to say, they both made an excellent decision!
- And finally, to the incredible supporters and advocates who are the CSUSM University Council – I can't thank you enough for hosting this event today and for all that you do for our campus and our students.
- Since I started last July, so many of you have reached out to me to offer support and goodwill.
- I couldn't possibly name you all – but you have each played such an important part in welcoming me.
- You solidify what it means to be a community-engaged university and the role Cal State San Marcos plays as a bridge builder and sector spanner.
- I am so grateful.
- Everywhere I went, I heard about the potential of our region, the multitude of ways CSUSM positively impacts the community and the talent of our graduates.

CAMPUS LISTENING & LEARNING

- On campus, my Listening & Learning tour has taken me to labs, classrooms, centers, offices, events and so much more.

- I'd like to say that I don't get lost anymore when I walk across campus – but I still have my moments!
- While faculty and staff have invited me on formal tours – I've occasionally popped into classrooms spontaneously to meet students and professors in action.
- In one classroom, there was a stressful moment with a quiz, and I backed up quickly!
- But in most cases, I've been welcomed right in and students have told me about meaningful interactions with faculty and what they are learning.
- I remember my first day: I visited the labs of our Viasat-sponsored Summer Scholars Program and met several students.
- In one of the labs, a local high school student was working on a chemistry project with one of our undergraduates to investigate the behavior of a local endangered butterfly species, their habitat threatened by recent wildfires.
- I attended the Southern California Conference for Undergraduate Research that drew over 1,000 undergraduate students from nearly 100 colleges and universities.
- What a wonderful forum to attend and see our students presenting and discussing their work with their peers.
- And I even learned a little bit myself about green chemistry!
- I loved seeing how faculty mentors are nurturing students so that they can see themselves as scientists – part of the broader research community, both locally as well as globally.
- In my many interactions, I've gained a strong understanding of the work being done to support student success and career readiness.

- From professional mentoring programs to Executives in Residence – I even attended the Senior Experience Tradeshow at Sony in December.
- I was so impressed with the variety of projects including the work our students did with Dan's Place, a restaurant connected with Chabad of Poway, that provide special needs adults with vocational skills for work in the hospitality industry.
- The students' project, which assisted in the creation of marketing and operations plans, was made possible through the generosity of Malin Burnham.
- Every year, Malin provides funding for several nonprofits to participate in our Senior Experience program – another clear win-win for both our students and our community organizations!
- Attending the tradeshow reminded me that one of my most meaningful experiences as an undergrad was creating a marketing plan for a small business.
- I remember what it meant to work with a new business owner and really feel like I was making an impact.
- I still use what I learned in that class today.
- My learning tour also took me to some high-tech learning spaces, including nursing simulation and skills labs, complete with robotic mannequins.
- I received hands-on training to see if I could assist one of the mannequins – and I'm pretty sure we all agreed that we would leave that to the students from here on out!
- However, I learned just how embedded many of our health and human service programs are in our community – nursing just one example of several.

- In fact, students in these programs provide more than 500,000 hours of fieldwork, internship or clinical services at our partnership sites each year.
- One of those partner sites is Tri-City Medical Center.
- I had a chance to speak with several of Tri-City's leaders last month and am so proud to have community-based partners like them that strive to enrich our region while providing our students with internships and learning opportunities across the disciplines.
- We are so proud to be the home of the newly renamed SHILEY CSU Institute for Palliative Care, a center that is truly on the forefront of palliative care education and workforce development.
- And certainly, we have so much gratitude to Darlene Marcos Shiley, our Institute's most generous supporter.
- On my tour, I even ventured to the edge of campus to see the Sustainability Food Project Garden where students are not only learning about our global food system but are also growing vegetables for our Cougar Food Pantry.
- In fact, the pantry – an initiative of our student government – is just one example of the many areas on campus that are focused on supporting our students' success in and out of the classroom.
- Another example is the Cougar Care Network, a model program that addresses student concerns through a referral and information hub.
- From housing and food insecurity to financial, social and emotional challenges, the Network refers students to on-campus resources – such as Student Health and Counseling – as well as off-campus resources, including many of your community nonprofit organizations.

- I also want to share that I've had a lot of fun attending my first Cougar athletic games.
- It is evident that our athletic program is such a source of campus and community pride.
- Two of our biggest women's basketball fans are CSUSM Foundation Board Director Carleen Kreider and her husband, Dick Lansing, who I know will join me in my excitement that our women's team is currently second place in the CCAA standings ... and Dick and I celebrated a great win last Saturday.
- Go Cougars!

FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

- As I heard about all the wonderful things our university is doing, I must acknowledge we have our challenges.
- Our community partnerships have confirmed our relevance and our important role in this region ... but something that has played out very publicly in the press is related to our commitment to fiscal stewardship.
- As you know, last July – my first month here – I received a complaint calling into question the use of funds by one of our employees.
- I requested an independent investigation by the CSU Chancellor's Office around this complaint and we began a comprehensive review of travel expenditures here at the university.
- What we've discovered so far in our internal review is that the vast majority of our employees are working hard each day to make the right choices – I have no doubt in that.

- But we are seeing several instances that point to the need for additional safeguards training and staff resources so that we can help our employees better comply with policies and procedures.
- We are seeing clerical and procedural issues which need to be addressed – and we are doing so.
- We are adding both personnel and technology resources, and we have updated our travel policies and guidelines with new training to ensure our employees have the best tools and information available.
- In fact, as of last month, all managers have attended a newly redesigned training for approving travel requests.
- However, I have to openly acknowledge that there have been a few instances that can't be excused as mere clerical oversight.
- As I thought about what I would share with you this morning, I struggled with how I might describe what we are seeing.
- To give you a few examples, in some instances, we are seeing trends where travelers frequently purchase upgraded airfare or select hotels where the lodging costs exceed the maximum rates.
- In some rare cases, I've seen things that are simply inexcusable.
- While I can't go into detail now as the report is not yet complete, I need you to know that this is unacceptable, and this is not what we are about. Moving forward, we are hitting the reset button on our cultural drift.
- I remember meeting Chancellor Tim White for the first time and understanding the great work and stewardship in education that is a part of the CSU and Chancellor White's leadership.

- That is what Cal State San Marcos is about.
- I remember my first official trip to campus last spring.
- I heard so much about our values of intellectual engagement, community, integrity, innovation and inclusiveness.
- While I can't pledge perfection any more than you can for your organizations and businesses – we are committed to do better.
- I stand with this campus ready to learn – even I've received new training along with all our managers.
- I pledge to you here and now that I will lead from the foundation of our shared values.
- Actions speak louder than words – so we are going to show through our deeds – that we want to earn the trust of our students, our families, our faculty and staff, and you our community who proudly helped us begin and grow for the last 30 years.
- The CSU's investigation and our internal review will be complete in the very near future.
- As soon as they are available, you can expect to hear from me.
- We are going to be very public about sharing the results and recommendations, and how we will implement change.
- We will be transparent.
- We will grow and improve.
- We will do right by our students and our community.

- As president of this university, I'm not going to let this moment define how we partner with you nor define how we support our students.
- And I'm starting right here and right now with this Report.
- CSUSM is a place of optimism, of opportunity and of innovation.
- These are just some of the reasons why I came here – and it's certainly what I've continued to find.

BILL STACY

- This fall, we marked the 30th anniversary of CSUSM's founding.
- That's three decades of academic inquiry and impact, three decades of student access and achievement.
- Many of you may know about CSUSM's founding president, Dr. Bill Stacy.
- As it happens, I know Dr. Stacy too!
- Following his time here, he went on to become the chancellor of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.
- One of my first phone calls when I realized that I received this job was to Dr. Stacy and I will never forget our conversation.
- We talked about how special this campus is.
- He shared with me his vivid memory from 1989, when he visited the site of where this campus would one day be.

- But just look around at this vibrant place you have created together.
- It has certainly exceeded the expectations set by Dr. Stacy and our founders all those years ago.
- And just the other day – my phone rang again, and I was so pleasantly surprised to hear Dr. Stacy’s voice on the line once again.
- I was able to tell him that I know I am standing on the backs of giants – with his work along with that of Dr. Alexander Gonzalez and of course, Dr. Karen Haynes.
- Over the last three decades, our university has discovered and honed its voice, its place, and its mission.
- Now it’s time to ask, what do we want the next 30 years to look like?

STUDENT SUCCESS

- That question gets me excited – because while so much has been accomplished in such a short amount of time, our potential is truly limitless.
- Already, CSUSM’s reputation as a socioeconomic escalator for students of all backgrounds precedes itself.
- In fact, it’s one of the biggest reasons I decided to apply.
- As you heard briefly in the opening video, my career in higher education has been deeply focused on student social mobility and student success – I couldn’t pass up an opportunity to lead a university that has already made so many great strides in this area.
- I owe so much of my career’s focus and drive to my parents, who essentially raised me on a college campus.

- Both my mom and my dad worked in academia ... my father was a faculty member in the College of Education at Tennessee Tech while my mother was an administrative assistant in the College of Engineering.
- They inspired my passion for higher education as I was exposed to the way they cared for their students and supported their academic and personal success.
- In fact, my parents cared about student success even before higher ed coined the phrase, and they remind me of the many talented faculty, staff and community members who today are supporting our students in and out of the classroom.
- They had a profound influence on my passion for higher education – but it wasn't until I was an adult that I appreciated the depth of their story and the boundaries they pushed in their own way.
- My father grew up on a farm, English wasn't his first language and he was himself a first-generation college student.
- I would not be here today if my parents hadn't paved the way.
- They set the example for me through how they lived and served students.
- That's why, throughout my career, I've been so focused on efforts that would yield more students succeeding in and graduating from college – from founding and directing the first Center for Social Mobility in the nation at Old Dominion University to helping launch a network to help adult learners finish their degrees via the Online Virginia Network.
- I'm excited to be part of Cal State San Marcos – where the focus on social mobility and student access is already such a solid part of our foundation.
- I'm excited to build further on this with you.

- Our deepest purpose and our highest calling as a university is to empower potential and lifelong success.

SOCIAL MOBILITY/EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

- However, nationally, higher education is often called out for contributing to the great socio-economic divide.
- While college graduation rates keep soaring for the affluent, for those in the bottom half, a four-year degree is scarcely more attainable than it was 50 years ago.
- But I believe that Cal State San Marcos is still the embodiment of what the CSU system was created to be back when the California Master Plan for Higher Education was incorporated.
- I was so pleased to learn that CSUSM was just ranked 36th out of almost 1,500 schools in the annual Social Mobility Index by CollegeNET.
- This means we are one of the top universities in the country when it comes to educating more low-income students at a lower tuition and graduating them into good paying jobs, prepared to lead in the world of tomorrow.
- You are partners in our success as we strive to help our students develop strong self-awareness ... an ability to collaborate across sectors with empathy for the communities they serve ... critical thinking skills to develop innovative solutions to complex challenges ... and the courage to take action even in the face of adversity.
- So, how do we best equip our emerging leaders to understand and face today's tough issues?

- Well, one critical strategy is community engaged learning, centered on mutually beneficial collaboration between our campus and you, our community partners.
- According to a recent Gallup poll, student exposure to community-engaged learning opportunities and internships is the number one predictor of their future career success.
- This entails a “learn-by-doing” approach of hands-on, experiential opportunities – such as research and internships – that supplement traditional classroom learning.
- And here at Cal State San Marcos, based on what I’ve observed and heard, I think this campus is second to none in this kind of out-of-classroom learning experiences we are providing our students.
- Let me tell you about a few of our amazing students and alumni.
- For example, Kevin Mendoza, a first-year computer science student, has already received some amazing hands-on experience.
- This past summer, not only did he have the wonderful opportunity to intern at Northrop Grumman, but he also participated in Google’s Computer Science Summer Institute Extension program – a 3-week summer experience for incoming CSUSM freshmen studying computer science or engineering.
- I have no doubt that when Kevin graduates, he will be ready to lead in the industry.
- And I really want to tell you about professor Kristin Moss’ Art and Social Change class.
- This past December, her upper-division course culminated a semester-long project by presenting a 74-page plan to officials at the City of San Marcos and North City developers.

- That plan will be a blueprint as San Marcos considers how to beautify the neighborhood that's springing up just across the street from our campus.
- This project is just one of several initiated through our Democracy in Action program which expands our students' civic learning and their horizons, showing them the variety of careers, they can enter when they graduate.
- You know, I was amazed to learn that last academic year, we facilitated over 2,600 community-engaged learning opportunities at over 500 community businesses and organizations.
- This is what integrated engaged community learning is all about – and it is changing the economic trajectory of individual students as well as the economic trajectory of our region.
- Our students are not only finding their future careers, but they are emerging as the kind of leaders our society needs most – equipped with the skills and confidence to understand and face today's most pressing challenges.

OUTCOMES

- Moving forward, we are going to put our arms around these experiences and – with your help – grow them further into a national model of how universities and communities engage with each other.
- In addition, for every student that walks through our doors, we will look at how we are serving them throughout the student life cycle – from first point of contact to graduation day and beyond.
- This semester, we will begin a university-wide strategic planning process and I want you – our community – to be a part of helping us envision and lay the groundwork for our next 30 years.
- We want and need your input.

- Since our founding, Cal State San Marcos has played a unique role in our region, providing access to many students who simply wouldn't have had the opportunity to attend college otherwise.
- As you know 55% of our Class of 2019 were first in their family to graduate with a four-year degree.
- And 42% were from historically underrepresented populations.
- This is so impactful when you consider that 8 in 10 of our 48,000 alumni have stayed in the region.
- In all their great diversity and with all the wonderful life experiences they bring, they are truly shaping our communities.
- National statistics tell us that first-generation students whose family income comes from the bottom economic quintile have only an 11% chance of graduating in six years.
- So, for every first-generation student that we accept and then support through to graduation means that we not only alter the trajectory of their own lives, but that of their families and the entire community for generations.
- I've been so impressed by stories of our students' perseverance – and it has reminded me how important it is to offer not just pathways to careers but to successful futures – and it's only made possible thanks to you, our community partners and supporters.

VETERANS/MILITARY

- As we think about all of the ways we, together, support our students, I also think about our many specialized services and wrap around programs for populations most at-risk.
- Many of you know about our renowned program for former foster youth as well as our efforts to better serve our American Indian students.
- We serve the highest per capita number of former foster youth in California and I was so proud to learn that Cal State San Marcos has the only increasing number of American Indian students in the CSU.
- There are several other centers that focus on providing personalized support and are doing many wonderful things, but this morning I want to talk for a moment about our military connected students.
- We proudly serve about 470 veterans and 1,700 active duty and family members – that’s about 11% of our total student population.
- I can’t thank the Epstein Family enough for their generous gift, which allowed us to expand the footprint of our Veterans Center and is funding critical programs to support our military connected students.
- I was just in the center a few weeks ago and our students took the time to tell me how grateful they were for the space as well as the support they are receiving.
- They also shared some thoughts for areas where we can grow in our service to this population.
- Dan has brought us such great ideas and several of you have mentioned to me that we might look at how we can partner with military installations in our region.
- Together we want to continue our focus on creating access for military-connected students, while enhancing their educational attainment and success through internships and other experiential learning opportunities.

- Whether our students come to us out of high school, community college or the military, I want Cal State San Marcos to not only break the barriers of what higher ed has been but pave the way toward what it can be.

ENGINEERING

- A great example of this is our new engineering programs and how we worked with regional partners to hear concerns about workforce gaps and find opportunities to bring a very in-demand program to fruition.
- Building engineering at CSUSM has been, from the start, about creating the very best program possible to help foster a diverse talent pipeline.
- Key to our success in this area was founding partner Viasat. Here with us today are Vice President of Corporate Quality Simon Kuo and his team.
- Simon, I want to express our deep appreciation for your ongoing support.
- Thanks to you – and the support of several other industry partners including Hunter Industries – we were able to welcome over 120 engineering students this past fall.
- And, later this spring, we'll celebrate the ribbon cutting of the Viasat Engineering Pavilion, with state-of-the-art spaces for learning, making and collaborating.
- But in just a few short years we will be at capacity again and we know the demand for qualified and diverse engineers isn't going away.
- That's why we are already visioning the next academic building on campus: an Integrated Science and Engineering building to grow our current programs and, in time, add other engineering disciplines.

- To make this dream a reality, we are going to need additional philanthropic support.
- This is an exciting time – and we can all have a part in laying the groundwork for future innovation across our campus.

INNOVATION

- I know many of you will agree with me when I say that students of today must have the capacity to reinvent throughout their lives.
- Just thinking about 30 years from now, I have no doubt our workplaces will be very different, shaped by globalization, advances in digital tools and media, artificial intelligence, and much more.
- That’s why I charged a faculty committee, led by Dr. Chuck De Leone and Dr. Sharon Hamill, to help us capture our institutional identity around innovation and entrepreneurship.
- They recently submitted a report that highlights the multitude of ways we engage in innovation and entrepreneurial activities every day.
- The committee also looked at how we might create an innovation and entrepreneurship hub that brings resources, education and support together in one central location, serving as yet another important gateway for our campus and community.
- This includes a focus on social innovation and educating our students to become more socially conscious leaders.
- I know our students are going to be the change we so need in our world.

- While we aren't the first to establish an innovation hub or to think about how we can teach our students to be innovative and socially aware, we are among the first in the nation to consider how we might launch something of this nature at the intersection of inclusion, diversity and student success.
- It's exciting to talk about this because its reflective of who we are and the qualities we have exhibited since our founding.
- Our innovation hub will be a gateway that goes both ways:
 - A place for business and technology leaders from our community to collaborate with student entrepreneurs and faculty researchers.
 - And a place for students and faculty to bring innovations to the marketplace.
- And doesn't this bring us back to what we're all about as a community-engaged university – intimately and indivisibly linked with the region we serve?
- This is exciting work, paving our way for our next 30 years.

CLOSE/VISION

- I know I've only been here a short amount of time relative to many of you.
- But if there's anything that I've learned over these seven months is that this community supports this university like no other I'm aware of.
- And in doing so, look at all that's been accomplished!
- I hope you feel my excitement.
- I have found in you a wonderful spirit of collaboration, commitment, innovation, and respect.

- I promise to work with you – our campus community and community partners – together we’ll create the Cal State San Marcos of the future that this region wants and needs.
- As you leave here today, I ask you to join me in dreaming and developing a bold vision for CSUSM’s next 30 years.
- We will build on our mission of social mobility and student success through our partnership in community engaged learning.
- Charting our course, we will become a national leader in helping students throughout the student life cycle, fueling the needs of our region.
- We will build our programs and processes with the end-user in mind, from the student experience, to the faculty experience, to the staff experience, to community experience to anyone who is part of our greater community.
- Together we will equip the trailblazers of tomorrow who will lead a new day in our community and world through collaboration and inclusion.
- This is how we will chart the next 30 years.
- We will build on the important work already done and take it to new heights.
- We will become a model not only for you, our community, but for the entire CSU, our state and our nation to follow.
- We will lead the way together.