



Dear CSUSM community,

As we prepare to close the fall semester and 2021 calendar year, I am pleased to share with you the outcome of our national search for our next vice president of Student Affairs. Dr. Viridiana Diaz has accepted my offer to serve in the role beginning Jan. 13, 2022.

Dr. Diaz currently serves as associate vice president for Strategic Student Support Programs at California State University, Sacramento, where she serves as one of the primary vehicles for leveraging student success initiatives, breaking down systemic barriers to success, tending to equity gaps, and achieving goals set for by the CSU Graduation Initiative 2025 through program development, implementation, assessment, project management and fundraising. She is also responsible for the leadership of nine Student Affairs departments offering admissions and outreach, academic advising, financial advising, career counseling, experiential learning, leadership development, health and counseling services, tutoring, mentoring, peer-based support and population-specific interventions.

Her career at Sacramento State and in higher education has spanned 20 years, all of it dedicated to creating a more inclusive campus for first-generation, Pell Grant-eligible, migrant, immigrant, undocumented, LGBTQIA+ and out-of-school youth. Previously, she served at Sacramento State as assistant vice president for strategic diversity initiatives, special assistant to the president, co-director for the DEGREES (Dedicated to Educating, Graduating and Retaining Educational Equity Students) program, director of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), career counselor/coordinator and admissions and outreach counselor.

Dr. Diaz brings a strong commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion as well as cross-divisional campus partnerships and community engagement. Her impressive career is in perfect alignment with our collective dedication to student success here at CSUSM.

As a first-generation college student, Dr. Diaz completed a bachelor's degree in communications studies, a master's degree in Latin American literature, a second master's degree in history and a doctorate in educational leadership and policy. She is also a graduate of UC Berkeley's Executive Leadership Academy, Stanford University's Executive Leadership Management Institute and the Harvard Institutes for Higher Education.

She is serving as a 2020-2021 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) Leadership Academy fellow and as a 2021-2022 American Leadership Forum Mountain Valley Chapter Class of XXV fellow. Furthermore, she is a recipient of the Sacramento Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Latina Star Award and was named by the Vida en el Valle newspaper as one of the "People Who Have Left a Mark in the Sacramento Area."

I am excited to welcome Dr. Diaz at this historic moment as we prepare to launch our institutional strategic plan and support our students in achieving their academic and lifelong goals. As a student-centered, collaborative and innovative leader, I am certain that Dr. Diaz will be a tremendous partner to all of us in our work.

I want to thank all those who participated in the process and shared input along the way. I especially thank our search advisory committee:

- Leon Wyden, vice president of Finance and Administrative Services (chair)
- Gail Cole-Avent, associate vice president, Student Life
- Bennett Cherry, interim dean of CoBA (faculty athletics rep)
- Dylan Crivello, president and CEO, Associated Students, Inc. (ASI rep)
- Patricia Diaz, Student Outreach and Referral (SOAR) coordinator (Student Affairs staff rep)
- Julie Jameson, associate professor, biological sciences (faculty rep)
- Valita Jones, director, Office of Student Success Coaching
- Leigh Quijada, counselor, ACE Scholars Services (Student Affairs staff rep)
- Shaelyn Rusnak (student rep)
- Mia Torres (student rep)
- Stephen Tsui, department chair, physics (faculty rep)
- Sarah Villarreal, chief of staff (staff support and EEO rep)

A reception will be organized in early spring 2022 to welcome Dr. Diaz to campus. In the meantime, please join me in congratulating and welcoming her to the Cougar family.

Sincerely,

Ellen Neufeldt
President

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