



Dear CSUSM Community,

These last few weeks have brought so many unimaginable changes. To our students, I know that this has been a stressful and anxious time. Many of you have shared your struggles, and you aren't alone. To our faculty and staff, I recognize the enormous challenges you have faced. I am grateful for the great care you continue to show to our students and each other.

We are truly in this together.

Every day, local, national and global news reports provide updates on how this health crisis is impacting people around the world. In the early days, we began hearing reports that COVID-19 was stoking xenophobia, hate and exclusion. As the pandemic spread, we learned that the virus was disproportionately affecting minorities, bringing to light yet again the many systemic injustices and economic inequalities that continue to exist across our country.

In the midst of this, today also marks the first anniversary of the Poway synagogue shooting, that resulted in the death of Lori Gilbert-Kaye, beloved by her family, friends and fellow congregants at Chabad of Poway. In honor of her memory and as a symbol of our support and solidarity against anti-Semitism and all forms of hate and oppression, I've ordered the CSUSM campus flag to fly at half-staff today.

I was still on the East Coast at my former institution while this tragedy was unfolding, but I will still never forget the moment when I heard that a member of our own community – a student – was alleged to be responsible. We may never be able to truly understand how or why this could have happened, but my heart is with all those who continue to heal. I am thinking of you today.

I stand in solidarity with you in declaring that bias, discrimination, racism, bigotry and hate have absolutely no place in our community. Especially now as we navigate through the uncertainty of COVID-19, we must remain dedicated to creating a safe, welcoming and equitable campus where we work together to create a university climate that advances the values of respect, inclusivity, civility and academic excellence.

To that end, I want to share with you that I recently pledged my support to the [joint statement](#) from over 50 San Diego Asian Pacific Islander (API) Organizations, including CSUSM's own API Faculty/Staff Association, which denounces xenophobia, racism, and acts of violence toward API communities.

I also signed on to a statement in support of DACA recipients, which calls upon the federal government to continue accepting DACA renewals, and refrain from deporting Dreamers while Congress works toward a more permanent solution.

During these uncommon times, we are called upon to remember and recommit to our values of inclusion as well as our culture of care. I have heard many examples of faculty and staff who have gone above and beyond to serve our students as well as create opportunities for virtual community building.

- Our Academic Senate introduced a resolution on hate with a final vote scheduled for the next Senate meeting. I am thankful for our faculty's thoughtful and proactive leadership as we collectively denounce racism and hate in all its forms.
- Dr. Alyssa Sepinwall recently participated in a live virtual discussion hosted by the San Diego Center for Jewish Culture's Arts & Ideas series, where she shared how she has adapted her classes and how her students are managing.
- Staff and peer educators in the LGBTQA Pride Center have put together a series of programs on social media and in virtual spaces, ensuring that services, education and mentorship continue to support our students while also celebrating Campus Pride Month.
- TRIO Student Support Services has begun hosting weekly social hours, open to any student in the program who would like to gather to chat, laugh and connect. Students have shared some of their creativity, including drawings, what they are cooking, streaming, reading and how they are celebrating special moments with family – ensuring that no matter the distance, they are able to still feel connected to and supported by CSUSM.

Thank you to ALL our students, faculty and staff for what you are doing to offer your wonderful and innovative ideas to keep us linked – the health of our virtual campus climate is vitally important. Please continue to share your moments of #CSUSMGratitude on social media or [nominate a campus hero](#). No matter the distance between us, we all play such an important role in creating a caring, diverse, equitable and inclusive Cal State San Marcos community.

Sending my good wishes to you and your loved ones.

Sincerely,

Ellen Neufeldt
President

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