



Dear CSUSM community,

As we prepare to close the academic year, I want to share another exciting development that will bring new leadership to our university. Earlier in the spring semester, we began a national search for our next chief diversity officer. Today, I'm pleased to share with you that I've appointed Dr. Aswad Allen to serve in the role beginning in early August.

Aswad currently serves as the inaugural chief diversity officer at Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas. Reporting directly to the president, he serves as the university's chief diversity and inclusion advisor and strategist, and works collaboratively with internal and external campus communities to develop and nurture an open, diverse, inclusive and supportive learning and working environment with a specific focus on underrepresented and marginalized populations.

Aswad is known as a higher education thought leader on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. In addition, he brings over three decades of experience in developing and leading innovative, sustainable and collaborative student-focused initiatives, and creating models for engaging students, faculty, staff and the broader community in the work of inclusive excellence. At this historic moment, as we begin to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and the many interrelated crises, I have great confidence that Aswad's background, skills and vision are exactly what we need at CSUSM to strengthen our efforts to create a more caring, inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community.

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

- Lorena Checa, vice president of Student Affairs (chair)
- Ranjeeta Basu, interim chief diversity officer
- Janelle Espirit (Office of Inclusive Excellence student representative)
- Michael Garrett, president, ASI (student representative)
- John Rawlins III, director, Black Student Center (Office of Inclusive Excellence representative)
- Rebeca Perren, assistant professor, marketing (faculty representative)
- Joely Proudfit, department chair and professor, American Indian Studies (faculty representative)
- Laurie Orr, counselor, ACE Scholars Services (staff representative)
- Arun Sethuraman, assistant professor, biological sciences (OIE Workgroup #1 representative)

I also want to express my deep appreciation to Interim Chief Diversity Officer Ranjeeta Basu. Last July, Ranjeeta transitioned from interim provost to interim CDO without a moment's hesitation. I am so grateful for Ranjeeta's tremendous wisdom, guidance and leadership during these last 10 months. Finally, my gratitude to the Office of Inclusive Excellence staff, faculty directors and partners across the university for their wonderful spirit of resilience and teamwork during this time.

A virtual welcome reception will be organized in the coming weeks to formally welcome Aswad to campus. In the meantime, please join me in congratulating and welcoming him to the Cougar family.

Sincerely,

Ellen Neufeldt
President

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