Subject: Leadership Update
Date: Thursday, May 7, 2026 at 11:37:40 AM Pacific Daylight Time
From: Office of the President
To: Christine Paik

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Dear campus community,

It is bittersweet news that I share with you that Dr. Patricia Prado-Olmos has let me know she will retire at the end of the 2026-27 academic year. Over this next year, she will step away from her senior leadership role as chief community engagement officer and serve as special assistant to the president, focusing on key initiatives to support the university during this important transition.

On a personal note, I will deeply miss Dr. Prado-Olmos' counsel and partnership on the President's Advisory Team. She has been an invaluable member of our university leadership and a steady presence through moments of both challenge and progress. I still remember her role in welcoming me to CSUSM as a member of my presidential search committee. Over her nearly 30-year career, she has been a constant presence, as one of the longest-serving senior leaders on our campus and a trusted partner to me. I am profoundly grateful, as I know many of you are, for all that she has contributed to and shaped at our university. I am also thankful that she will remain with us in the year ahead, continuing to support the institution to which she has given so much. Her wisdom and care have made me a better leader.

Over the course of her remarkable career at CSUSM, she has helped ground our work in community, equity and a deep sense of responsibility to one another. She has long understood that CSUSM is a university of place, and through her leadership, that commitment has taken root in meaningful and lasting ways. She has strengthened relationships across San Diego and Riverside counties, understanding that partnerships are rooted in the communities that we serve. She led the launch of our Alliance Program, a model within the CSU in forging strong college-going pathways with our K-12 districts. She has led our numerous presidential advisory councils, elevating CSUSM's role as a trusted and engaged regional partner.

Her leadership has also positioned CSUSM among a select group of institutions nationally. Under her guidance, the university earned the prestigious Carnegie Community Engagement Classification – an affirmation of the deep and sustained partnerships that define our mission and expand opportunities for students to engage

through service and experiential learning.

What has always set Dr. Prado-Olmos apart is how she has led with heart, intention and an unwavering commitment to others. She brings people together. This was evident in her earliest years as a faculty member in the School of Education. She often has shared that her time in the classroom, preparing and inspiring future educators, remains among the most meaningful chapters of her career.

Her impact extends far beyond our campus. Dr. Prado-Olmos is widely respected across the region for her civic leadership, and it was especially meaningful to see her recognized in 2025 as Woman of the Year by the North San Diego County branch of the NAACP as well as 2025 Nonprofit Board Leader of Influence by the San Diego Business Journal for her work as the board vice chair for MAAC (Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee).

You can read more about her extraordinary career and impact in this Newscenter article.

As we look ahead, I want to assure our campus and community partners that community engagement will remain central to who we are as a university. Building on the strong foundation Dr. Prado-Olmos has established, we will continue to advance this work in integrated and intentional ways across our institution.

Please join me in thanking Dr. Prado-Olmos for her extraordinary contributions to CSUSM and to the communities we are proud to serve. We look forward to celebrating her in the year ahead.

With appreciation,

Ellen J. Neufeldt, Ed.D.
President