Subject: Welcome Back to the Spring Semester
Date: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 4:01:34 PM Pacific Standard Time
From: Office of the President
To: Christine Paik

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Dear CSUSM community,

Welcome back, Cougars, and happy start to the spring 2026 semester! I love the energy on campus as everyone returns for the semester ahead, and I hope you had time over the break to rest and reconnect.

As we begin a new year and a new semester, I've been thinking a lot about what this community makes possible every day. This is why being named the **No. 1 university in the nation for social mobility** by CollegeNET is so meaningful – not because of the ranking itself, but because of what it reflects. I think about students sitting in classrooms this week – some the first in their families to attend college – asking questions, testing new ideas and beginning to imagine new paths forward. I also think about the many people on this campus who make that learning possible: faculty who teach and mentor, staff who support students through academic and co-curricular programs, advisers and counselors who help students navigate challenges, and the teams who care for our buildings and campus spaces so students can learn and belong here every day. Every day, shared work is what this recognition truly represents.

CSUSM is moving forward with intention and momentum. We are becoming the university our region needs us to be. At the same time, I know that this past year had many challenges. What gives me confidence is that even within a broader landscape of ongoing uncertainty, we have stayed grounded in our values. CSUSM continues to believe that every student belongs here. We continue to lead with care and purpose. And we continue moving forward together.

I am grateful for each of you and for the role you play in advancing our mission of student success. I wish you a meaningful and productive spring semester.

Sincerely,

Ellen J. Neufeldt, Ed.D.
President