Dear CSM Community,

Moments of realization come when we may least expect them. As we are wrapping up finals week, I hope everyone’s semester is coming to a successful close.

This past Saturday, I picked up my daughter from the airport. She returned home after completing the first quarter at her university. While coming home is always special, I realize in my daughter’s eyes home is never quite the same on the return. Growth requires loss as much as it promises hope and success. I cannot help but feel that as a college, as we plan to spend the winter recess with family and friends, we will be reuniting in spring, having grown much this past almost two years.

Thank you to the many people who have been on campus. While we transitioned most of our courses and resources online nearly two years ago, let’s recognize those who remained on campus. This includes our facilities, public safety, and ITS teams, as well as faculty, classified staff, administrators, and students in nursing, fire science, dental assisting, and police academy. In addition, our athletic programs were quick to return in September 2020. The dedication of these individuals to keep our operations, academics, and athletics going is inspiring and appreciated.

Recently, a faculty member asked me what my highlights for the year are. Without a pause, I replied, working in collaboration with all of you in a wide variety of ways, building relationships, and connecting with community partners. This semester has been a joy for me, and I thank you for making my first semester as your president a successful one. Your support, care, and genuine commitment to our institution inspires me.

Let us promise each other not to forget what is important. Sometimes in the most stressful of situations, the path to follow lies in the basics, the simplest components of what we do: our simple task is to fulfill our assignment. So allow the many stressors to pass over you. Kindness, patience, grace, and understanding will always be our best step forward in facing our fear of the unknown.
Our keynote speaker for the January 13 Flex Day, Elena Armijo, will help us regroup and share inspiration, as together we dare to lead into and through this transitional period. Her talk will focus on the importance of leadership in the “messy middle.” In shared leadership and shared responsibility to each other and our students, we embrace the messy middle. We all have an individual responsibility to be active and engaged. And we rely on each other’s skills, talents, and leadership to meet the inevitable challenges and opportunities that will come.

I’m excited that this keynote opportunity will be available to all employees as we will close campus services on January 13 until 1 pm. This will allow all of our frontline staff to participate in the morning sessions and lunch. One of my priorities as president is more professional development access, and this is our first step towards that goal. We will be communicating this closure broadly to our community in advance and post signs at all entrances with QR codes to our virtual front desk where students can get assistance during the half-day closure.

As a little girl, I remember how Maya Angelou’s poem did not just speak to me. It spoke for me. Until I developed my own voice, it gave me strength, permission, agency when I had not yet earned it. The power of poetry is real, tangible, and undeniable. I hope the poem might speak to you or even speak for you as we take to heart its universal message of overcoming.

*Just like moons and like suns,*  
*With the certainty of tides,*  
*Just like hopes springing high,*  
*Still I’ll rise.*

Whatever our challenges come spring, whatever our obstacles, we will rise with our students and enjoy great success. I wish you a joyful winter break and look forward to seeing all of you in the new year!

In community,  
Jennifer