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| Date: | August 23, 2024 |
| To: | CSUDH Toro Community |
| From: | Dr. Kim CostinoDean, Undergraduate Studies |
| Subject: | Announcing the Center for Community Engaged Teaching and Research, the Next Evolution of SLICE |

 Dear CSUDH Colleagues,

As many of you know, the Pillar of the Community component of our strategic plan states that “mutually informing and beneficial connections” between the CSUDH campus and the communities of which it is a part will be a “fundamental strength” of the work we do as a campus community. Our beloved Cheryl McKnight and her SLICE team have laid a solid foundation for this work by establishing and building strong community partnerships and programs such as Students in Service, JumpStart, and JusticeCorps, to name a few. Miami Gatpandan and Francisco Checkcinco have continued to grow and lead this work in the wake of Cheryl’s retirement, while Sarah Taylor, Brett Waterfield, and Derick Mims, the co-chairs of the Pillar of the Community Working Group of the Strategic Plan Implementation Committee, conducted a “listening tour” across campus to learn about the community engagement activities on campus: what is happening, what’s working well, and what the challenges are.  With the assistance of Dr. Maria Avila, former faculty in Social Work, who served as a consultant on this project, the co-chairs also conducted several faculty focus groups, a campus-wide forum during Toro Hour, and a campus-wide survey.

 A clear finding from this work is that we have a lot of exciting community engagement projects on campus, much of which is due to Cheryl McKnight’s leadership and vision. However, now that so much work is happening and so much interest has been generated, it is equally clear that we need more intentional, integrated structures to support and reward this work, particularly the work of community engaged teaching and research, while also continuing to support the current student facing programs.

 To help design and bring these support and reward structures to fruition, Dr. Avila, who retired from CSUDH in 2021, has agreed to come out of retirement to serve a two-year appointment as the Interim Director of the Center for Community Engaged Teaching and Research, the next evolution of SLICE. Dr. Avila, who is originally from Mexico, has over two decades of experience in community engaged scholarship, first as Director of the Center for Community Based Learning at Occidental College (2001-2011), where she created a model of civic engagement based on community organizing practices. Using participatory action research methodologies, she researched the role academic institutions play in society, through community engaged scholarship through her PhD at Maynooth University in Ireland (2009-2012), and as a postdoctoral Mellon Fellow at the University of Southern California (2012-14). She was the recipient of a Fulbright award in Ireland (2010), and a second one in Colombia (2021). Her recent book is focused on five research in action projects she conducted with faculty, students, and community partners during her tenure as faculty at CSUDH. The title of the book is *Building Collective Leadership for Culture: Stories of relational organizing on campus and beyond* (2023).

Please join me in welcoming Maria to this new role and in thanking Miami and Francisco for so ably leading SLICE to this exciting next step. They will be joining Maria in the Center and supporting its evolution.

**Kimberly Costino, Ph.D.**

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