Jolene Koester Appointed Interim Chancellor of the CSU

California State University, Northridge president emerita to assume university leadership on May 1, 2022

(March 23, 2022) – The California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees has appointed Jolene Koester, Ph.D., to serve as interim chancellor. This marks a return to the CSU for Koester who previously served as president of California State University, Northridge (CSUN) from 2000-2011. She succeeds Dr. Joseph I. Castro who resigned as chancellor on February 17, 2022.

“The CSU and its 23 campuses make a significant impact on California and the nation, and I am deeply humbled by the opportunity to serve as their interim chancellor,” said Ms. Koester “The commitment of our world-class faculty, staff, administrators, executives, and trustees deeply align with my values to provide life-changing educational opportunities for our students. I look forward to learning and providing my skills to guide the university during this transformational time in CSU history.”

Koester currently serves as a senior consultant for American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). In her role, Koester works with university leadership on matters such as strategic planning, change management and team building.

Previously Koester was the president of CSUN. She led the campus through a time of exponential growth with the student population expanding by more than 25%, growing from 29,000 to nearly 37,000. During her tenure as president, CSUN increased retention and graduation rates and conferred more than 68,000 degrees. The campus also opened the Soraya, a state-of-the-art performance center which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary serving as the intellectual and cultural hub of the San Fernando Valley.

“With her institutional knowledge of the university and long-standing history of service to higher education, Dr. Koester is the perfect person to lead the CSU during this time,” said Lillian Kimbell, chair of the CSU Board of Trustees. “CSU’s graduation and retention rates have reached all-time highs, but there is still a great deal of work to be done. We appreciate Dr. Koester’s passion and commitment to rejoin the university.”
Koester originally joined the CSU as an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at California State University, Sacramento. Over the course of her 17-year tenure on the campus, Koester also served as an associate professor, professor, department chair, assistant vice president, associate vice president, and vice president for academic affairs before ultimately serving as provost. Her prior experience in higher education also includes service at the University of Missouri, Columbia and the University of Minnesota.

Koester graduated magna cum laude in earning a bachelor’s in speech communication from the University of Minnesota. She earned a master’s in communication arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a Ph.D. in speech communication from the University of Minnesota.

Koester will assume the role of Interim Chancellor on May 1, 2022, and her appointment is expected to last for 12 months while the Board of Trustees undertakes a search for a permanent chancellor.

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About the California State University
The California State University is the largest system of four-year higher education in the country, with 23 campuses, 477,000 students and 56,000 faculty and staff. Nearly 40 percent of the CSU’s undergraduate students transfer from California Community Colleges. Created in 1960, the mission of the CSU is to provide high-quality, affordable education to meet the ever-changing needs of California. With its commitment to quality, opportunity and student success, the CSU is renowned for superb teaching, innovative research and for producing job-ready graduates. Each year, the CSU awards more than 132,000 degrees. One in every 20 Americans holding a college degree is a graduate of the CSU and our alumni are 4 million strong. Connect with and learn more about the CSU in the CSU NewsCenter.