

## California State University, Chico Statement of Philosophy for the First-Year Experience

The Statement of Philosophy for the First-Year Experience for the California State University, Chico is grounded in the university's *Strategic Plan for the Future*,<sup>1</sup> which includes statements on *Our Vision*, *Our Mission*, and *Our Priorities*.

The *Vision* of California State University, Chico notes the unique value of the institution's setting as the basis for an environment for growth and accomplishment:

***“California State University, Chico sees its unique residential situation as an opportunity to create an intensive, high quality learning environment. We are able to create a vital and collaborative community of active and involved students. We have a well-respected and caring faculty, a superior support staff and innovative leadership together with cutting-edge learning and information resources – all placed within a beautiful and engaging physical environment. In such an enriched community, we hope to stimulate intellectual rigor, moral development, and creative accomplishment and to evoke callings to imaginative citizenship in the worlds beyond the University. We aspire to be the university of choice for all those seeking these strengths.”***

The CSU, Chico *Mission* underscores the institution's dedication to quality education for our students:

***“Our first priority is the education of our students by creating and maintaining selected quality undergraduate and graduate programs. We will be known for the purposeful integration of liberal and applied learning that provides our students with the knowledge, skills, and moral and intellectual virtues that form the basis for life-long learning and contribution.”***

CSU, Chico's *Strategic Priority #1* proclaims the intentional structuring of student learning both in and outside the classroom:

***“Believing in the primacy of student learning, we will continue to develop high quality learning environments both in and outside of the classroom.... Our commitment to education as a way of life, both in and outside of the classroom, and our commitment to developing ‘systems of learning assessment that enable students to demonstrate learning in both courses and programs’ (The Cornerstones Report, Principle 1b, page 6), remain our highest priorities.”***

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted October 9, 1995; updated February 3, 1999.

The first year of university life is a time for transition, growth, and development of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for academic success, intellectual growth, living independently, and developing interpersonal relationships, and emotional well-being. It is also a critical period for identity development based on one's own thoughts and accomplishments. CSU, Chico acknowledges the transitional challenges and issues that students face in the first year of university life and strives to expand and sustain an institutional awareness of the unique needs and experiences of first-year students.

Accordingly, the CSU, Chico *Statement of Philosophy of the First-Year Experience* is:

We believe that the first year of university life is critical to student learning and success, and that we can intentionally help first-year students reach educational and growth goals and achieve success. We subscribe to a broad definition of first-year success to include higher levels of academic, intellectual, cultural, social, and civic engagement and personal development. To promote student success, we will purposefully structure, restructure and nurture learning environments that facilitate the broad scope of student engagement and personal growth.

CSU, Chico is committed to the development of a First-Year Experience program that embodies these beliefs and goals. CSU, Chico's First-Year Experience endeavor will be woven into the fabric of the institution through the involvement of faculty, staff, and students. This campus-wide commitment to the development and enhancement of programs and services is intended to help students make a successful transition to, and establish their place in, university life – a life that finds support and encouragement both in the classroom and in all aspects of university and community experience outside the classroom. First-year programs and initiatives will build upon the following principles:

1. Students will have opportunities to forge **connections** with other students, faculty, staff, and with the institution's resources and facilities.
2. Students will be encouraged to take **responsibility** for learning to set academic, career, and personal goals, and develop strategies for achieving them.
3. Students will **build competence** in foundational intellectual skills to include critical thinking, verbal and written expression, and quantitative reasoning.
4. Students will be encouraged to establish high levels of **engagement** in intellectual endeavors and will experience the purposeful integration of liberal and applied learning that provides the knowledge, skills, and moral and intellectual virtues that form the basis for **life-long learning** and **personal growth**.
5. Students will encounter and understand new and **diverse ideas, viewpoints, and people**, interact with people different from themselves, and explore and evaluate opinions and values different from their own.
6. Students will understand how **service to the community, thoughtful citizenship, and environmental awareness** can enrich personal identity as they become participants in a community of active and involved students.

We will use diverse methods in assessing all aspects of our students' first-year experience, and will analyze and disseminate assessment information to better understand

the CSU, Chico first-year experience and to ensure continuous improvement in the facilitation of student engagement and achievement in the first year.