

Welcome to Spring term 2024! We welcomed 22 new students into the MA degree programs this quarter. And we welcome new staff and faculty.

In our Spring Heartlink, Graduation 2023 is showcased as are the newest murals and artwork of our Art Therapy students. We have just achieved national recognition as a provider of Continuing Education for Counselors across the country. And the Presidential Search Committee has completed its national search for a new President, Dr. Thom Chesney, PhD, who introduces himself in this issue. Thom will begin on July 29.

As we get ready to take another giant step forward, let's take a look back. We are empowered by our unique mission, *Transforming Consciousness through Education*. Even as we embrace change, what remains constant are our values, vision, and mission. So let's look back over the primary accomplishments of the College during the first four presidencies. Let's look back over the past four years of focused work on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging as we reconfirm our commitment to this important community cultural work.

March 19 marked the official beginning of Spring. It was also the day the sun moved into the sign of Aries, the first sign of the zodiac, making it the astrological New Year. Spring is also a window of time with special holidays for many world religions.

Ramadan, celebrated by Moslems worldwide, is the first of this series of holidays and began the evening of March 10 and will end on April 9. The Passover Holiday is celebrated by Jewish people from before sundown on Monday, April 22, ending after nightfall on April 30. Easter Sunday is celebrated by Christians on March 31, and marks the culmination of Lent, which began with Ash Wednesday on February 14 and will end on March 28 as Good Friday is recognized on March 29.

These holy days are important to millions of people on our small, precious planet. If you celebrate any of them, please know that we support you. We recognize these holy days bring familial, cultural, and religious traditions. Specific times may be set aside for prayer, singing, fasting, special foods, shared meals, mourning, remembering, reflection, community celebrations and being together. Let us respect all the ways we recognize our relationships. Let us be enriched by the many ways people connect with Source, by whatever name you know the Enduring Presence, Life Force, Spirit of Life, the Indwelling, the Outpouring, the One. Or perhaps you are most familiar with one of these names: God, Allah, Yahweh, Creator, Creatrix, Great Mystery, Jesus, Buddha, Eostre/Ostara (the ancient Germanic Goddess of Spring, Dawn and Fertility who held as sacred hares, rabbits, eggs, and other symbols often connected with Easter celebrations). Or perhaps you best know Source by no name at all.

Let us pause, whatever our beliefs and traditions, and honor each other. I am grateful for the amazing diversity in our community. I affirm and celebrate all we can learn from our different cultures, histories, and personal stories. I believe our diversity makes us stronger

just as the ecological diversity in a field or forest gives it greater capacity to be resilient and adapt to change. We are better together. Current efforts in our country to erase the richness of our differences and disappear the often-painful histories of our forebears do not serve us or our children. We can simultaneously celebrate all that makes us different and all that unites us as human beings who care about our lives and the lives of others.

Thank you for being part of the Southwestern College community.

Yours,

President Ann Filemyr, PhD