

# REMARKS TO CUPERTINO, CA ROTARY CLUB

Dr. Mary A. Papazian

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President Judy and Cupertino Rotarians, thank you for inviting me to speak today! I am delighted to be here.

I had an opportunity to peek at your ClubRunner newsletter, and learned some interesting things.

For instance, I was interested to learn that this Chapter was established in 1955, making it older than me!

Of far greater significance, Cupertino Rotary has supported our community through a commitment to education—funding scholarships, summer youth programs and much more—for six decades.

I am impressed that you've supported Robotics programs and other STEM education initiatives, and you've made it

possible for local students to attend summer programs at Stanford.

Now, I have learned in my early months in San Jose that anywhere people gather, San Jose State is well represented. May I ask any Spartans to raise your hands? Aha! Spartan Up!

You see? We are *everywhere*. And I hope we can work together on getting Cupertino middle and high school students over to *our* campus!

As I noted, this Rotary chapter has a rich legacy. So does San Jose State.

Today I want to reflect on my early months as SJSU's 30<sup>th</sup> president—I'm just the 3<sup>rd</sup> woman to hold that post in 160 years!—and some of what we're doing to build on its rich legacy.

Next Friday in Washington D.C. our 45th president will take the oath of office. I've just returned from Washington where I visited with lawmakers and administration officials.

Whatever side you might have been on, this election undeniably caught many of us off-guard. While I am not here to wade into politics, it should be noted that our nation's diversity has rarely been viewed in such sharp focus.

And San Jose State reflects that diversity. Home to 33,000 students, SJSU is the 12<sup>th</sup> most diverse public university in the U.S. We open doors of opportunity to students who otherwise might never have the chance to earn a bachelor's degree.

And a four-year degree opens doors that likely would otherwise remain shut.

I am a fourth-generation Californian. My immigrant great-grandparents settled in Southern California in the early 1900's. My parents met as students at UCLA, where I later pursued my own undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Coming home to California after spending many years in academic positions in Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut was a homecoming for me.

But I also was attracted by San Jose State's remarkable legacy.

SJSU is the oldest public university in the West, and the founding campus of the 23-campus California State University, the largest public comprehensive university in the world.

We sit in the center of America's tenth largest city and the world's epicenter of innovation. We are the top provider of talent in engineering, education, business and finance,

health care, public and social service. We really *do* fulfill our promise of powering Silicon Valley.

I spent much of last summer and fall meeting our students, faculty and staff, alumni, and community leaders like you.

I am extremely confident that San Jose State has the power to be—and *should* be—America’s preeminent metropolitan public university.

We have the power to shape the future. Let me explain for you why this is so.

First, our students are simply remarkable; they are resilient, resourceful and *determined*. Close to half of the new students who joined us in fall 2016—the proverbial “Class of 2020”—will be the first in their families to earn baccalaureate degrees.

I have met many of these students. They know they are blessed by a tremendous opportunity, and are fiercely determined to succeed.

They also are uncommonly committed to the common good. In December, some of them camped outdoors next to our iconic Smith/Carlos sculpture. They did this to experience for one night what thousands of homeless in our county endure *every* night.

This is one example of the conviction and selflessness that SJSU students bring to our campus and our community. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to serve them.

Our faculty members are dedicated to student success. Consistent with San Jose State's legacy as the state's first Normal School for teacher preparation, they are educators at heart. Many university professors prefer research to teaching. Not ours.

Thanks to additional funding from the state and generosity from private donors, we hope to hire as many as 130 new faculty members over the next two years. It's been a long time—going back to the last Recession—since we've been able to add faculty to keep up with enrollment growth.

And growing and diversifying our faculty ranks is essential to helping more students complete their degrees in less time.

The state expects this of us. Employers depend on us to supply the talent they need.

Now, we *know* that some students simply can't complete a degree in four years; for some, personal circumstances make it unworkable.

And we would be abandoning our unique mission if we expected every student to give up part time jobs and family commitments.

But we want—and we need—to support those students who are capable of moving at a faster academic pace.

We are attacking this challenge on multiple fronts, investing in additional faculty and academic advisors, better technology, and more.

We also have made significant physical improvements to better serve students, faculty and staff, and the community.

How many of you have visited our newly expanded and renovated Compean Student Union? It is a beautiful, lively space, teeming with activity from morning to dusk. If you haven't, I hope you'll visit soon.

Last October we opened a new residential tower, creating capacity for 800 additional students to live on campus.

Several of our old “bricks” dormitories have been knocked down to make room for construction of a student recreation and aquatics center.

Thanks to a multi-year partnership with CEFCU Credit Union, we are making long-overdue renovations and improvements to the newly named CEFCU Stadium--Home of the Spartans.

Speaking of which, I am very excited about the future of our football program under the leadership of new head coach Brent Brennan. I hope you'll plan to join us for a game this fall.

Athletics play an important role in community engagement. Thanks to private support, we soon will complete the first phase of a comprehensive renovation of our South campus athletic and recreational facilities. A new golf practice facility will open this spring.

But sports facilities are by no means our only priority. How long do you think it's been since San Jose State added a new academic building?

The answer is: our “newest” academic building opened in 1988. Nearly 30 years later, we’ve gotten approval to begin planning an interdisciplinary science and innovation center.

The state is providing a jump-start through construction bonds, and we are now seeking private support to ensure that we can build a contemporary center for teaching, research and public/private collaboration.

I was stunned to learn that the state of California offers virtually no support for capital improvements at its public universities. Can you believe that?

Well, it’s true. Community colleges—even some high schools—have an easier time securing public funding to modernize their facilities than four-year universities.

That doesn’t make sense; our four-year universities fuel innovation and supply the talent needed in a rapidly evolving workforce. California may decide someday to

address this from a policy standpoint. But in the meantime, we are reliant on community support.

I know Paul Lanning, our vice president for advancement, would be happy to talk with you about opportunities to partner with us.

Beyond this, there's much more to do if we are to meet the needs of our students and the region.

The Public Policy Institute of California a year ago estimated that California will need 1.1 million *additional* college graduates by 2030 to keep up with emerging workforce needs.

San Jose State supplies more talent to our valley than anyone--in science and technology, healthcare, the arts, public and social service, business and finance. And we want do more.

I meet regularly with industry leaders, as well as local, state and federal public officials. I am heartened by how much they're counting on San Jose State to contribute intellectually and concretely to meeting the region's needs.

Over a decade ago, San Jose State leaders had the vision to partner with the city of San Jose on a joint library. The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. library is a national model for university/civic collaboration.

More recently, San Jose State and the City of San Jose reached an agreement for the university to operate the Hammer Theatre Center for the next three years, restoring artistic and cultural programming and helping revitalize downtown.

But I believe we can and should do more if we are to fulfill our promise as the premier American metropolitan university. As you all know, this region faces significant housing and transportation challenges.

Recent voter-approved measures will help, but we need broader long-term solutions. Our university has great intellectual and creative assets to bring to the table.

And as an uncommonly diverse public university with 33,000 students and nearly 6,000 faculty and staff, I think ours is an essential voice in the critical conversation we must have about race and gender equity.

San Jose State boasts a quarter million living alumni. Two-thirds of them live and work in the Bay Area. Did you know that? I bet not. Far too many are unaware of our legacy, our impact, and our vast untapped potential.

That will change. Being a premier metropolitan public university means reaching beyond our borders, imagining what is possible, and being a willing and engaged community partner.

We've got to think *big*. A community leader recently asked me if I had a five-year plan for the university. I told him that we need to imagine our *twenty-five year* plan.

And I was serious. Primitive mobile phones were introduced barely two decades ago. Facebook didn't exist 14 years ago. Did any of us imagine then how starkly different our lives might be today?

So we need to be thinking and planning *now* if we are to be a university that effectively serves the needs of a region that will surely look quite different than it does today.

That is why we are working with community leaders to ensure that when BART arrives in downtown San Jose, the stations are designed and located where they'll best serve our region's needs for decades.

And that is why we're looking at opportunities to establish a physical presence beyond our campus, where we're becoming landlocked.

Great communities and great universities go together. San Jose State has a phenomenal legacy, and big dreams. We need community leaders like you to help us achieve them. I hope we can dream together.

Thank you again for inviting me to be with you today.  
Please visit our campus soon!