

2016 FALL WELCOME ADDRESS

President Mary A. Papazian
August 25, 2016

Thanks, Michael, for your insightful remarks, gracious introduction, and steadfast commitment to San Jose State.

Good afternoon!

I am Mary Papazian. And I am thrilled to welcome you to the 2016 President's Fall Welcome Address.

I was appointed to serve as your president on January 27th – two-hundred-twelve days ago. (Let me add, as one of *five* women named this year to lead CSU campuses, and the *third* woman to lead San Jose State in its 159-year history).

How about that?

I've waited more than *thirty weeks* for the opportunity officially to greet you as we begin our grand journey together.

It was a long wait! But it was worth the wait.

I am proud to be a Spartan!

As you know, San Jose State University sits in the heart of America's 10th largest city. Let me begin by welcoming and thanking our community partners who have joined us today.

Just as *we* are part of the city and community, *you* are part of the Spartan family. Thank you for being here today.

And speaking of family: I'd like to introduce you to my husband, Dennis.

I can't wait for you to get to know Dennis. He is an emeritus faculty member of the University of Michigan, Dearborn, where he had a long career teaching and studying Russian and eastern European history.

I'm thinking he might be open to giving a talk or two. His stories are legendary!

Dennis and I have two wonderful daughters. Our oldest, Ani, graduated from college in Boston a year ago and is working at Massachusetts General Hospital as a lab manager while she studies for the MCAT's—actually, she is taking the MCAT's as we speak! And Marie, our youngest, is en route to the east coast preparing for her senior year of high school.

Dennis and I look forward to introducing you to them at a later date.

Also joining us today are our niece Louise Yardumian and her husband Haig, who have stopped by for a visit *en route* from visiting their granddaughter and her parents in Taiwan before returning home to Florida. Welcome Haig and Louise!

SO—*here we are!*

We begin our journey together, and a new academic year, filled with hope.

Hope for a *new beginning*.

In these next few minutes, I want to share just a sense of who I am and what led me to San Jose State University; let you know what I've heard in my initial conversations; and offer a few thoughts about where we might be headed.

Some of you may wonder why an English literature professor who had spent her entire academic career in the Eastern Time Zone was intrigued by the opportunity to lead a campus on the “other” coast.

The answer is partly personal. For me, this is a homecoming of sorts.

I'm a third-generation Californian. My maternal grandparents both were born in Fresno before relocating to Los Angeles as small children.

In fact, my grandfather's family was among the earliest Armenian families to arrive in Southern California, in 1905.

That's also where my grandparents met and later married, in the early '30's.

And my parents, Marilyn and Hagop, *also* met in Southern California, as students at UCLA. They settled in the San Fernando Valley, where my three brothers and I were raised.

(I want to pause here for a confession: I was worried that talking about my Southern California roots might elicit some boos from our Giants fans. You're a pretty friendly audience. Thank you for that! And my dad was born in Athens, Greece, but he doesn't mind that I am now a Spartan!)

My mom and dad were married for fifty-nine years—it would have been sixty this coming Sunday. They were deeply involved in Armenian culture, helping establish the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Southern California, not too many miles from where we were raised.

I later followed in my parents' footsteps, attending UCLA and ultimately earning

undergraduate and graduate degrees there before pursuing an academic career.

My parents were *overjoyed* to learn that I was coming to San Jose State University. They felt—and I feel--as if I were coming home.

But my interest was based on more than that. I was also attracted by this university's remarkable legacy. You know much of this story.

We were the first public university in the West.

We were the founding campus of the California State University—the largest public comprehensive university in the world.

We are Silicon Valley's public university.

We are also one of America's most diverse universities.

We have a quarter-million living alumni. And two thirds of them live right here, in the Bay Area.

Spartans influence life, locally and globally, in ways seen and unseen. And our potential, when we work together, seems limitless.

We attract students, faculty and staff who are smart, resourceful, and uncommonly determined.

So, *you bet* I wanted to be here. And I am truly honored to be your 30th president.

As we enter our 160th year, where do we stand?

And for *what* do we stand?

I've spent a good deal of my time this summer in conversations with campus colleagues and community partners.

I like to talk—as you can see—but I *love* to listen. Here's some of what I've heard so far.

My arrival pretty much coincided with weekly summer orientation sessions for new students and their families.

The families were great! I found myself leading them in “S-J-S-U” chants. (I don’t know what *they* thought of that, but I think I’m primed for football season. GO SPARTANS!)

More to the point, I was reminded of the profound responsibility that comes with serving students who in many cases will be the first in their families to earn college degrees.

This is central to our mission. This sets us apart.

And speaking of serving students, let me take a moment to thank the staff—and particularly, the Student RA’s—who have worked so hard to help the 800 students impacted by the delayed opening of Campus Village II.

They all have done an amazing job. Join me in thanking them.

And speaking of our staff—*many* have expressed to me heartfelt pride in the work they do.

I know—and you surely know—that the financial rewards are greater in high tech than in higher Ed.

Despite that, you've chosen *this* work. And it matters. You have every reason to be proud.

Our African American and Chican@/Latin@ Student Success Task Forces, for example, are striving to eliminate achievement gaps among underrepresented minority students.

This is complex, critical work—and it is central to our mission. I've heard concerns from some staff about just how much it is valued, and whether they'll have a seat at the table as we plan and implement broader student success initiatives.

Let me be clear: their work *is* vital. The people doing the work *are* valued. And there *will* be seats at that table.

I've been in touch with members of our faculty, too. And I've been impressed and amazed by their stories.

The impact of our academic expertise is enormous, stretching well beyond our campus borders.

Dennis, Marie and I visited Moss Landing Marine Labs shortly before their 50th anniversary celebration earlier this month. The faculty there are educating and mentoring the next generation of marine scientists while doing cutting-edge research aimed at preserving coastal and marine health.

Closer to home, our faculty are forging deep connections with their students and the wider community.

I was introduced recently to an array of academic/community partnerships. So many, in fact, that my head was swimming. (I can't seem to stop with the marine metaphors, can I?)

This is impressive work, and we need to continue to nurture and support these academic partnerships.

Some faculty, in fact, have told me they'd love to see the university, writ large, as engaged with the community as they are.

We're not quite there yet, but we're on our way. And I say that with confidence, because community leaders have told me so. They truly sense that our doors, our minds, and our hearts are open to them.

They are thrilled to see San Jose State University stepping up to re-vitalize the arts and the downtown corridor by agreeing to operate the Hammer Theatre Center for the next three years.

They want our help seeking solutions to regional housing and transportation woes. And they *know* that we are essential to the ongoing national dialogue about diversity, inclusion and gender equity.

Community leaders are concerned about student housing and food insecurity. I've been heartened by their desire to help.

We boldly promise that San Jose State University *powers Silicon Valley*, and that what powers us changes our world.

It's true. Business leaders tell me they value and prefer to hire our graduates. But you knew that long before I arrived.

And most of you know that Silicon Valley needs *more* of our graduates. There's demand for talent in STEM (or STEAM), obviously, but also in healthcare, the arts, public and social services, education, finance and business.

No university is better positioned to meet that demand than San Jose State University.

I've also heard real anxieties tied to our astronomically high housing costs—among the highest anywhere. I needn't tell you how much this impacts faculty, staff and students.

There aren't any magic answers. But I can promise that we will work with *anyone* interested in attacking the problem.

And speaking of attacking a problem: While we're proud to be the founding CSU campus and the West's first public university, our age is showing.

Our last "new" academic space—the Engineering building next door--opened almost thirty years ago. Many older buildings have outlived their useful lives.

And let's face it: some of our science labs belong in a science *museum*.

There is some progress. We're sitting in a beautifully renovated Student Union. A beautiful Student Wellness Center opened last year. Yosh Uchida Hall is newly renovated. Dudley Moorhead Hall is finally getting air conditioning!

As I mentioned earlier, a new residential tower on campus will open soon.

Planning is underway for a new Student Recreation and Aquatic Center. And we've begun renovating the South Campus.

Best of all, plans are in the works for a new interdisciplinary building for science and innovation. It's about time.

While we are making progress, options for meeting current or future capital needs are very limited. In the long term, that's unsustainable.

I discussed this with our legislative delegation during a visit to Sacramento earlier this month.

We can get there, but it will take creative partnerships and new ways of thinking.

Speaking of new thinking: We all can be proud of the comprehensive student success plan rolling out this year.

This is leading-edge work. It addresses critical steps we must take to help students succeed at every step in their journey:

Improving their readiness for college.

Hiring tenure-track faculty and adding class sections in traditionally bottlenecked courses.

Increasing advising support.

And, focusing on ways to better connect, engage and retain students.

We are already seeing early indicators that we are on the right track. When pre-semester course registration closed on Sunday night, 55 percent of first-year students had registered for 14 or more units. A year ago, barely one-third of first-year students did so.

Trust me: that is a huge deal. Let's give a big shout-out to our Student Affairs and Academic Affairs teams for their great work.

With 500 new class sections being added this academic year to address bottlenecks, and 68 new tenure-track faculty members joining us, we intend to help students get the classes they need to shorten their time to graduation.

And we are fully committed to meeting or exceeding new four and six-year graduation

targets. We'll be talking a lot more about these efforts this year.

But we can't succeed by going it alone. We'll need to collaborate, internally and externally.

Increasing philanthropic support is also vital.

And on that front, I have great news to share today: in the last fiscal year, San Jose State University received in excess of \$44.6 million in private gifts and gift commitments.

That is the second-best year for private philanthropy in San Jose State's 159-year history.

You need a great advancement team to do that. But philanthropy is a collective enterprise. Faculty, staff students—we all play a part.

Next week, we officially will dedicate this beautiful building as the Ramiro and Lupe Diaz Compean Student Union. Earlier this year, we celebrated a \$15 million gift commitment from Mrs. Compean—matching the largest single gift ever received at San Jose State.

Philanthropy is also an essential ingredient in ensuring student success.

Our nationally renowned Steinbeck Center was the beneficiary of a \$4.8 million gift from the estate of former San Jose State English professor Martha Healsey Cox.

A \$5 million gift commitment from Rich and Cindy Thawley is enabling us to build a new golf practice facility.

We are also rebuilding important relationships.

Three weeks ago we announced the reinstatement of men's track and field. The team will resume competition in early 2019, during the 50th anniversary year of San Jose State's 1969 outdoor national track and field championship.

The announcement ceremony gave me the opportunity to spend time with many of the Spartans who created San Jose State's Speed City legacy.

They were filled with pride at the opportunity to reunite with their alma mater, and each other. Many hadn't been back to campus for years.

I was reminded then, and during conversations with many community leaders, of the role Spartans have played in the struggle for human rights, social justice, racial and gender equity.

That fight, as we know, continues today. As a campus community, we have an important role to play in keeping that dialogue going.

A campus with the legacy and promise of San Jose State University also needs and deserves stability.

We are a community of dedicated students. A committed, gifted faculty. An amazing staff. And a strong leadership team.

We can only succeed by working together. None of us can do it all.

This fall, we welcome more than 9,000 new Spartans: 3,300 first-year students, 4,000 transfers, and 2,000 graduate students.

We have welcomed 68 new tenure-track faculty. We intend to recruit another 63 this year.

And we've welcomed staff members at all levels, and all over campus.

Professor Kimbarow introduced the cabinet earlier, but I'd like personally to welcome a few of our newest leaders.

Hector Perea, Jr. was elected last spring as this year's Associated Students president. Leading AS is a big job! I'll rely on Hector for input and insights throughout the year. Hector, we're in this together! Could I ask you to stand?

Tracy Elliott is our new Library Dean, leading one of our most important academic assets and examples of city/university collaboration. Tracy, could you stand for a moment?

Charlie Faas is our new Vice President for Administration and Finance, and Chief Financial Officer. Charlie is a seasoned leader with strong

community connections and expertise in finance and capital planning—key priorities for us. Charlie, where are you? Would you please stand?

Kathy Wong(Lau) joined us late last month as San Jose State's *first* Chief Diversity Officer. She is a national expert on issues of diversity, inclusion and gender equity. Kathy, would you stand?

Tracy, Charlie and Kathy join a committed, talented group of academic and administrative leaders. May I ask that all of our deans and president's cabinet members stand briefly?

Now, I have a little surprise: today is Provost Andy Feinstein's birthday!

Happy birthday, Andy!

Everyone, should we sing Happy Birthday?

Let's go!

You think we should post that to iTunes?

Given the time of day, I'm not sure how many students or faculty members are here, but may I ask students and faculty who are here to stand?

As I've said, true success is collaborative. We'll need the combined efforts of students, our faculty and staff members, our campus and community leaders, and our alumni. Please give yourselves a rousing hand. You deserve it!

Now, some of you have asked, "Mary, are you *staying?*"

I know there's a desire for stability. I understand why you'd ask.

Hopefully, my remarks are making clear how I feel about you and our potential.

But just to clear up any doubts: I'm not going anywhere.

I want publicly to commend Sue Martin for the wonderful job she did last year as your interim President.

Sue was transparent. She asked the right questions. She created room for honest dialogue. And she opened doors to the campus and community that some sensed had been closed for a while.

[And, in typical academic small world fashion, Sue also was Dennis's provost in his final years as a faculty member at the University of Michigan, Dearborn.]

Thanks to her wise stewardship and your collective good work, I believe we are ready to move forward with confidence. Are you ready?

Ensuring student success requires that we tell our story and inspire others to want to help us.

We have an amazing story to tell.

Take a moment, today or whenever you can, to look at the amazing storytelling throughout this Student Union and all over our campus. It's part of a strategic image-building effort that began a few years ago. It's great work, and it's exciting to see.

Many of you have told me you'd like to see our story shared throughout the City of San Jose, across Silicon Valley, and well beyond.

So do I!

San Jose State is Silicon Valley's public university. Through strategic investments, partnerships, and aggressive outreach, we ought to be seen everywhere!

And with your help, we will.

So, let's look ahead.

Will things change just for the *sake* of change?
No.

Will changes occur without collaboration, or communication? No.

But based on what I've heard, I think our campus community *is* ready for smart, strategic change.

Steve Jobs said, “For ... years, I’ve looked in the mirror and asked myself, ‘if today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I’m about to do today?’ And whenever the answer has been ‘No’ for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.”

Some of you have told me that you know we need to change some things.

I’m sure that’s true.

The same could be said about any university. And I’m inspired to see an openness among you to doing some things differently.

San Jose State’s current five-year strategic plan, adopted in 2012, expires next year. As it winds down, we’ll also begin imagining how to develop a new strategic plan.

Here’s what true strategic planning looks like to me:

First, it is inclusive. Active involvement of campus stakeholders should be a given. There's a role for our alumni and the community, too.

Second, it takes the long view. Ten years makes more sense to me than five.

Third, it demands patience. I *think* I'm patient. Perhaps you'll disagree.

But, seriously: We shouldn't, and we won't, rush through a planning exercise just so we can say we've done it.

And fourth, strategic planning should stretch us to imagine what's *possible*, not just what's practical.

The plan we create should help us transform, not just transact.

Let me end with a few thoughts about the future.

Steve Jobs biographer, Walter Isaacson, wrote that Jobs believed the sciences and humanities were inextricably linked.

Describing Jobs, he wrote, “*No one else in our era could better firewire together poetry and processors in a way that jolted innovation.*”

Isaacson also pointed out that Jobs believed in simplicity and seamless integration.

Are there lessons in those insights for us?

San Jose State provides more engineers to Silicon Valley than any other university.

Can we be the university that supplies the valley’s smartest *and* most socially conscious engineers?

We are already committed to enhancing student success and significantly improving four and six-year graduation rates over the next decade.

Can we fully integrate how we serve students so that we seamlessly support them from the day they’re admitted through the day they graduate?

And given all of the ways San Jose State is already integrated into the community at the grassroots, can we be known as the nation's preeminent metropolitan public university?

At the August 1st track and field announcement, Dr. Harry Edwards, Tommie Smith, John Carlos, and Lee Evans sat in this ballroom reflecting on the 1968 Mexico City Olympics and the controversial medal stand that helped fuel a global human rights movement.

Twelve years later, at the 1980 Winter Olympics, the U.S. men's hockey team upset the favored Soviet Union in the semi-finals.

As the clock wound down to zero, play-by-play announcer Al Michaels exclaimed, "*Do you believe in miracles?*"

That game will forever be known as the "Miracle on Ice." Perhaps it *was* a miracle.

But I'd like to think it taught us that when members of a team set their sights, their hearts

and their minds on a common goal, *anything is possible*.

I'd like us to believe that at San Jose State, anything is possible.

That's our legacy, you know.

Earlier, I mentioned the amazing stories of Spartans that are displayed in this building.

Like acclaimed author Amy Tan.

And native-American U.S. Senator and U.S. Olympian Ben Nighthorse-Campbell.

And LPGA champion golfer Julie Inkster.

And Intel CEO Brian Krzanich.

And Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Bill Walsh.

And County Supervisor Ken Yeager.

And, notably, SJSU alumna Marisela Castro.

In 2012, Marisela and fellow students, guided by Sociology professor Scott Myers-Lipton, helped pass a ballot measure raising the local minimum wage.

Marisela isn't as famous as some of her fellow Spartans—yet. But she, like the others, did something many thought was impossible.

That is also my mother's story. A child of an immigrant family, she went on to excel as an undergraduate and graduate student at UCLA.

Later, she taught English literature and history for over 25 years at a small Armenian high school in Southern California.

After retirement, she and my dad worked tirelessly to honor the victims and descendants of the Armenian genocide.

My mom passed away in February—on Valentine's Day—just days after learning I was coming home to California, and to San Jose State.

Many of her former students showed up at her memorial service. Together, we celebrated a life well lived.

I've been thinking about my mom as I begin my work here.

She helped prepare her students for lives of purpose.

She enriched her community through selfless service.

And she accomplished things that some never imagined possible.

Working together, so can we.

Here's to a great year!

Thank you. And Go Spartans!