

Fall Welcome Address

President Mary A. Papazian

August 24, 2017

Thank you, Professor Frazier. It always is an honor to be introduced by a fellow graduate of UCLA.

Let me also acknowledge and thank Associated Students President Ariadna Manzo, whose class schedule made it impossible for her to be here.

I am confident that Ariadna and her AS board will do a terrific job this year representing the interests of all San Jose State students.

Good afternoon, everyone. I am heartened to see so many of you here.

To those of you who are watching or listening to our live web stream, thank you for joining. It is a beautiful day in San Jose; I wish you were here.

I *also* wish that I could jump right into my prepared remarks. But in the aftermath of recent national and international events, I just can't.

What unfolded two weekends ago in Charlottesville and more recently in western Europe was jarring to the eye and searing to the soul.

We were reminded that human decency remains under attack by forces seeking to rip apart the fabric of respect and inclusivity that bonds civil societies.

I reject the notion, advanced by some, that the protest at the University of Virginia was about preserving historical artifacts or even First Amendment rights.

Our values compel us to protect the constitutional right of community members to express views that may be hurtful or even repugnant to others.

But our values *also* compel us to reject discrimination and hatred, especially when it is cloaked in the false equivalence of "political disagreement."

The California ACLU said it pretty well in a statement last week: "*White Supremacist Violence is not Free Speech.*"

Today, I want to assure you that we stand with the University of Virginia, the people of Charlottesville, and *all* communities in renouncing bigotry, racism, and religious intolerance.

In a time of such dispiriting divisiveness, let us all unite around our shared values—which include creating space for spirited, difficult conversations and respecting diverse views and perspectives.

I know we are up to the challenge.

OK. Back to the script.

I have to say—the summer flew by. Weren't we just together on Tower lawn for an investiture?

That was sixteen weeks ago. *Fifty-two* weeks ago today, we gathered in this ballroom for my first fall welcome address as your president.

That also was the first opportunity for many of you to meet my husband Dennis, who is with us today.

Dennis? There you are!

Some of you have met our daughters, Ani and Marie. Ani remains on the east coast working at Mass General Hospital in Boston while applying to med schools, but Marie is with us today. Hi, Marie!

This is something of a poignant moment for our family. Dennis and I soon are to be “empty-nesters,” like so many of the parents who dropped their children off here at San José State this past weekend.

In fact, Marie and I leave tomorrow morning for New York City, where she will begin her college career as a freshman next week.

And while that is somewhat bittersweet for us as parents, it makes the issues we will discuss today much less abstract. When we talk about “student success,” we are talking about real people—our daughters and sons, nieces and nephews, guardians and friends.

And so we celebrate the start of a new academic year mindful of the values that have served as this university's North Star for 160 years:

Intellectual curiosity.

Integrity.

Tireless devotion to students.

Think for a moment about this: 160 years.

That's a lot of tradition. Many milestones. And so much promise.

Whether you are a faculty member or staff member, a development officer or police officer, please remember: *we are part of something larger than ourselves.*

We are the stewards of San Jose State's legacy, and the guardians of its future.

And it continues to amaze me—the wonder of a daughter of immigrants; a humanist; a scholar of English literature leading *the* public university in the epicenter of the tech universe.

English and engineering. Poetry and particle science. John Donne and Steve Jobs. What do they have to do with each other?

This afternoon, I hope you will come to see that the keys to our future sit squarely at those intersections and others like them.

I also hope you will come to see that this future is very much the *present*.

2030. 2040.

These dates once seemed far off in the distance. Today, they are just around the corner.

Reflect, for a moment, on the reality that the children born *this* year will be 83 at the turn of the next century—in 2100. And with the advances in medicine we see every day, they most likely will be a very *healthy* 83!

Imagine what they will see in their lifetimes. Imagine what they will see as they move from elementary to middle and high school, and finally reach us at San José State 18 years from now, in 2035.

They will be the “class of 2039”! As I said, the future very much is upon us.

And with this broader framework, I would like us to cast our eyes outward at what is happening beyond our campus borders. It neither is wise nor productive to live or plan in a vacuum.

And so my hope today is to launch a dialogue about the inevitability of change and what it can mean to *embrace* change.

I want to begin to outline a roadmap for strategic planning and other priorities for the year ahead.

And I want to ask us to imagine a 21st century curriculum that taps into the minds *and* hearts of all of our students.

Let me start by saying that after a year as your president, I am more confident than ever that with open minds and willing hearts, there is little we can't do.

We can transform the lives and destinies of our students. We can help power the reinvention of our valley. We have been doing this for much of our long history.

We begin this academic year with some wind at our backs.

We have welcomed our largest-ever class of first-year and transfer students—more than nine thousand strong.

And with an estimated fifteen thousand students living within three miles of campus, we assuredly are *not* a “commuter school” any more.

Let there be no doubt: San Jose State is a *destination* campus.

We expect to add 55 tenure and tenure-track faculty positions this year, in the wake of 187 successful recruitments since 2014.

As a result, our tenure density—a measure of academic quality—is slowly rising.

Having attracted more than \$73 million in private gifts and commitments since 2015, we are ready to intensify planning for our next comprehensive campaign.

Just this week, we announced a commitment of \$2.5 million from alums Mike and Gloria Chiang to endow need-based scholarships for business students and fund other career planning programs.

Four and six-year graduation rates gradually are rising.

We have been recognized as one of America's top universities for fueling the upward economic and social mobility of our students.

The Sierra Club this week ranked San Jose State among the nation's fifty most sustainable universities. We officially are a “*Cool School!*”

With the development of our Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, we are better equipped to embrace the true meaning of diversity and inclusion.

We continue to deepen relationships in local, state and federal government and forge connections with industry, public policy and non-profit partners.

I'm reminded of something Steve Jobs said: "great things *never* are done by one person; they're done by teams."

We *are* a good team—and a big team, with nearly 35,000 students, 5,000 faculty and staff members; 270,000 living alumni, and countless friends.

Let us take a moment to acknowledge our team.

Class schedules make it hard for students and faculty members to break away for this address.

But I would like any students with us today to stand so that we can welcome you and express our appreciation. *You are why we are here.*

Thank you.

I would also like to invite faculty in attendance to stand and remain standing for a moment.

If you are among the 63 new faculty members joining us this fall, would you wave so we can give you a special Spartan welcome?

We are thrilled to have you. You may be seated.

Without a dedicated staff, not much gets done. I would like to invite all staff members in attendance to stand.

If *you* have joined San Jose State since last August, please wave.

Welcome! You may take your seats.

Let me now introduce our newest academic and administrative leaders; please hold your applause until I've finished.

First, the Don Beall Dean of the Davidson College of Engineering, Dr. Sheryl Ehrman. Sheryl comes to San Jose State from the University of Maryland.

Next, the Dean of the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business, Dr. Dan Moshavi. For Dan, this is a homecoming; he was a San Jose State faculty member in the late 2,000's.

Sheryl, welcome. And Dan, welcome home!

Two members of the president's cabinet have joined our community since last fall.

Vice President for Organizational Development and Chief of Staff, Jaye Bailey arrived here from Connecticut last October. Jaye qualifies as a "newcomer" even though her one-year anniversary is less than two months away.

And Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, Bob Lim joined us just eight weeks ago. Bob most recently served at the University of Kansas and in the Texas public university system, but he has deep roots in the Bay Area and attended San Francisco State.

I am also pleased to welcome Marie Tuite in her new role as Director of Intercollegiate Athletics.

I would like the rest of the cabinet to stand for just a moment. I'm grateful to this group for its leadership and commitment.

Thank you.

I would like Dr. Reggie Blaylock to remain standing.

Reggie recently announced that he will be leaving San Jose State this fall to return with his family to his home town of San Diego.

Reggie and his wife Felicia both have immediate and extended family there. One of their daughters is a second-year student at San Diego St.

As our Vice President for Student Affairs since 2015, Reggie has tackled his work with the same determination, boundless energy and infectious enthusiasm that made him a star student-athlete.

Reggie, we thank you for your unwavering commitment to students and the many ways you have enhanced our capacity to serve them.

You *always* will be a part of the Spartan family. Thank you so much.

So as we begin our 161st year, what is happening beyond our campus borders that might inform our own work?

According to author Thomas Friedman, society is in the midst of a second Renaissance, driven by curiosity and imagination and accelerated by the power of technology.

The evidence is all around us.

Driver-less cars.

Robots that may have figured out how to communicate with each other.

Smart phones that we use an average of 85 times a day, according to TechCrunch. Which sounds low to me!

Wearable devices.

Speaking of Apple: my cabinet and I visited their Cupertino headquarters last week to see some of what they are doing in the education space and to share a bit about what is happening here.

It was an eye-popping reminder that operating at the *speed of paper* makes little sense when there are opportunities to move at the *speed of innovation*.

And I was reminded of another observation from Thomas Friedman: there are two times to embrace change:

Now.

And later.

Sitting squarely in the heart of Silicon Valley, it is hard to ignore the drumbeat of change. We hear it from leaders in tech, healthcare, education, business, the arts, and sports.

As the valley's leading academic institution and its top source of college-educated talent, San Jose State is vital to the future of a region that is vital to the future of society.

We hear the same thing from our friends in government.

The city of San Jose is negotiating with Google to bring a mixed-use urban development to the area near the Diridon transit center, bringing as many as 20,000 jobs and associated economic development to town.

City planners are figuring out how and where to integrate two BART stations into the center of our downtown.

City and county leaders are struggling to address a serious housing shortage and a persistent homeless crisis. We experience the impacts of both every day.

California will need another million to million-and-a-half college educated workers by 2025. Policymakers are beseeching public universities to graduate more students in less time.

Everywhere we turn, we hear the same thing: *please help us!*

And that is precisely what we should *want* to hear.

So the question before us is this: are we willing and ready to help reinvent our region?

I am confident the answer is—Yes!

Why would we not?

It is *our* students who will help meet those workforce demands. And *today's* students are tomorrow's innovators.

And preparing our students for these opportunities obliges us to reimagine how we educate and support them.

I want to take a quick survey. If you studied the humanities, a social science or the arts—please raise your hand.

Thank you.

Now, if you studied a STEM discipline—science, technology, engineering or math—please raise *your* hand. Thanks.

This summer, I read *The Fuzzy and the Techie* by Scott Hartley.

The title refers to common vernacular at Stanford, where students in the humanities, arts and “soft” sciences are “fuzzies,” and STEM students are “techies.”

Hartley was a fuzzy in a techie culture. He grew up in Palo Alto, studied political science at Stanford, and worked at Google and Facebook before going to grad school and later becoming a venture capitalist.

I’m a “fuzzy,” too—which, on its face, might sound unflattering. A question for the fuzzies here today: were you ever asked how you planned to *use* your degree?

By a parent, perhaps?

I know I was.

Hartley has done just fine as a fuzzy. Today he advises venture funds while serving on the Council of Foreign Relations.

His book examines the impact and importance of “soft skills,” instilled by the liberal arts, on technology. Today, I want to focus on just a couple of his themes.

First, Hartley argues that fuzzies are critical to unleashing the power of techie-inspired tools.

He cites Steve Jobs’ conviction that “...*technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities ... yields the results that make our heart sing.*”

Second, Hartley calls the traditional divide between STEM and the liberal arts a false dichotomy. [This was a similar theme in a conversation in which I participated through the Business Higher Education Forum in Washington, DC earlier this summer]

He writes: “...*the debate over STEM versus liberal arts has obscured the fact that the so-called “pure sciences” ... biology, chemistry, physics and math ... are a core component of the liberal arts canon and ... computer science has ... been added to the canon.*”

Students, he believes, can and should be exposed to both.

Implied in that dichotomy is the notion—perhaps a hidden fear for some fuzzies—that the liberal arts aren't relevant to STEM education and have no meaningful place in an innovation economy.

Fuzzies, take heart. As Hartley reminds us, LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman studied philosophy at Oxford.

Pinterest founder Ben Silbermann studied political science at Yale.

The co-founder of Salesforce studied English literature. (You knew I would slide this in.)

And former HP chief executive Carly Fiorina studied medieval history and philosophy.

Hartley says “...*these ‘tech’ exemplars are grounded in educations that taught methods of interrogation and rigorous thought, with many technology companies formed on the philosophies learned through liberal arts educations.*”

He also cites a 2015 study suggesting that the fastest growth in high-skilled jobs is in professions demanding strong interpersonal skills—like nursing and business management.

Hartley does *not* think that techies are less important than fuzzies. Nor does he suggest that STEM students should switch to a “fuzzy” major.

Neither do I.

He *does* urge universities to embrace the liberal arts in preparing students to thrive in an innovation-based economy and *make hearts sing* at work, at home and in their communities.

So do I.

And we know how to do this.

Professor Craig Hobbs' Paseo Prototyping work blends engineering and marketing.

Professor Alejandro Garcia has shown the world how to apply the laws of physics to animation design.

Professor Fritz Yambrach has applied packaging technology and supply chain management to the life-sustaining mission of delivering water where it is most desperately needed.

Our simulation lab allows nursing students to engage in life-like, hands-on patient interactions.

And our general education requirements already include some immersion in the liberal arts.

But based on what is happening around us, could we think about doing even more?

How about a first-year student experience that is steeped in the liberal arts?

How about a senior-year capstone project that demonstrates evidence of critical thinking, communication skills and other forms of creative expression?

And while we're at it, how about adding coding to all majors!

Might steps like these help us prepare students to be both job-ready and *world-ready*?

Vision and ideas abound. But what else is possible? What else might we do?

There are many reasons to ask this of ourselves.

Needs across our university exceed available resources.

We are reliant on outdated, inefficient, cumbersome procedures and protocols.

Too few of our students are completing their degrees on time, while too many face housing and food insecurity.

Issues like these, as well as prior leadership turnover, may have left some of you dispirited.

And I know that some of you may be unsettled by the prospect of change.

Let me offer another view.

Lupe Diaz Compean, for whom this Student Union is named, made an extraordinary \$15 million gift to San Jose State. She told a university gathering a year ago that "*it's no big deal; you can do it, too.*"

Some misinterpreted her to be saying that any of us could make eight-figure gifts.

Now, if you *can* do that, please speak to me or Paul Lanning *right away*.

But that wasn't Lupe's point. She was trying to say that we all can support students and our mission in whatever ways inspire us.

Today, I want to suggest that each of us can follow Lupe's lead by being open to change—*meaningful, enduring* change.

We are about to begin work on a new strategic plan. Some of you have heard me say that I believe we should look at a ten-year horizon—if not longer.

And I am well aware that the process by which the previous five-year plan was conceived left some of you dissatisfied.

That said, this campus advanced over the last five years. I hope you will take a moment to look at the summary report that has been published online.

And I hope we all can embrace the progress that *was* made and, informed by lessons learned, move forward.

Let me tell you what we will do to ensure that those lessons aren't forgotten.

We will gather on September 14 for a public strategic planning kickoff, followed shortly thereafter by a series of workshops that will provide input for further study.

We will proceed with a sense of urgency, but we will *not* be rushed. *This will be our journey, not a sprint.*

Our work will continue through the winter, with a draft plan published next spring for community input.

Co-chaired by Provost Andy Feinstein and Senate Chair Stefan Frazier, the process will be guided by a campus steering committee and aided by an experienced facilitator.

There will be *many opportunities* for campus and community input.

We will be transparent and inclusive. A website has been created where you will be able to monitor updates and track progress.

But more than the planning itself, I am confident in our ability to make transformative change in the best interests of our students.

Here's why.

To me, institutions are best positioned for change when their leaders reflect the characteristics and values of those they serve.

We know that San Jose State is one of America's most diverse public universities. One benchmark of diversity is gender equity.

Many institutions in Silicon Valley struggle with this, as news coverage reminds us nearly every day.

According to a report issued in 2015, women held only 11 percent of executive positions in Silicon Valley. The numbers were comparable for CEO's.

Two years later, little seems to have changed. This June, ridesharing company Lyft issued a diversity report revealing that men occupied two thirds of its executive and managerial positions.

They aren't alone.

The other day, I did an internet search using the phrase "gender equity in Silicon Valley." The top result was a story in *The Atlantic* entitled "Why is Silicon Valley So Awful to Women?"

I am proud to say that things look quite different at Silicon Valley's public university.

This year's Associated Student board has ten women, six men.

Among the nine elected academic Senate executive committee representatives, four are women, and four are men. (One seat is unfilled.)

And you might have noticed that our president's cabinet has five men and five women.

Now, I do not believe that numbers alone prove anything. We know that diversity is measured by many factors other than gender.

We also know that this campus at times has struggled with issues of diversity and inclusion. We should not pretend otherwise.

But it is worth remembering that Associated Student board members and Senate executive committee members were elected by their peers.

Which suggests that our community values *what each of us can do* more than *who we are*.

I asked the president's cabinet to invest a fair amount of time this summer thinking about its role in modeling, inspiring and supporting change.

Psychologist Carol Dweck has written about the role of "personal mindsets" in guiding how we think and act. There are, she says, two basic mindsets.

A "*fixed mindset*" accepts things as they are and is wary of change: a 12-unit semester load is just fine, and the lack of on-campus housing for all students who need it is "just the way it is."

A "*growth mindset*" embraces challenges and won't settle for the status quo: students *can* successfully take 15 semester units, and we should be aggressively exploring student housing options, on campus and off.

In the year ahead, which path will we choose? The status quo?

Or the "*possible?*"

As we ponder that, consider all there is for us to do this year.

Addressing infrastructure needs including building a student recreation and aquatic center, renovating our south campus and planning a science and innovation complex.

Filling top leadership roles in three colleges and Student Affairs.

Aligning our strengths in health, innovation and related disciplines with the interests of our students and our region.

Reimagining the *entire* student experience—from recruitment through commencement—and organizing our efforts accordingly.

Continuing to reintroduce ourselves to the region through relationship-building and strategic branding and marketing.

Organizing ourselves more strategically to utilize information technology, transform our digital presence and improve the wayfinding experience for campus visitors.

Nurturing and strengthening a culture of civility and inclusion—more critical than ever in the current national climate.

Joining *Healthy Campus 2020*, a national initiative that embraces the importance of health and wellness in supporting student success.

And, along the way, having some fun!

So in this, our 161st year, what would it mean to *grow together* by adopting a growth mindset in all that we do?

How much more could we do for students and our community?

How much could we add to our rich legacy?

This year, let's find out. And let's enjoy the ride! Thank you very much.

Now, let's adjourn to the back of the ballroom for a reception. I look forward to seeing you there.