

REMARKS TO SANA CLARA, CA ROTARY CLUB

Dr. Mary A. Papazian

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

As the President of the oldest public university in the West, I have particular respect for other venerable institutions.

This club most certainly qualifies. Formed in 1936, its legacy of service is well-established.

That legacy, I was impressed to learn, is both local and global. Your support of the JW House has comforted countless local families facing medical crises.

And, partnering with ShelterBox has directly benefitted displaced individuals and families all over the world, including Syrian and other Middle-Eastern refugees.

As a great-granddaughter of Armenian immigrants and proud Armenian-American, that is especially near and dear to my heart.

I soon will complete my first year leading San Jose State. I've quickly learned that in this valley, any large gathering includes more than a few Spartans. If you're one of us, would you please stand. Aha! Spartan Up! We have a small gift for you. (Ask Paul or Barry to circulate with SJSU Alumni lapel pins.)

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

For the next few minutes, I'd like to share some impressions from my "immersion" year, and just a bit of what I hope to do to capitalize on our legacy as we prepare for very bright future.

Some of you might know that I officially was inaugurated last week. I know—almost a year after I arrived—that’s just how it’s done in the academy!

The day, however, neither was intended nor structured to solely be about *me*. It was about *community*.

And San Jose State is an uncommonly diverse community of learners and scholars. Home to 33,000 students, ours is the 12th most diverse public university in the U.S. Every fall, at least half of the incoming class of new students arrives intending to be the first in their families to earn a four-year degree.

We open doors of opportunity to students who otherwise might never have the chance to earn a bachelor’s degree. And that degree opens doors that likely would otherwise remain shut.

I am a fourth-generation descendant of immigrant great-grandparents who 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 has been a homecoming for me.

Beyond the opportunity to come home, I 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.

Given that we're in Santa Clara, I should acknowledge that the Jesuit university in your city is six years *older*! I have spent time with SCU's President, Fr. Michael Engh, and together I think we form a pretty solid duo.

San Jose State sits in the center of America's tenth largest city and the world's epicenter of innovation. We are a top supplier of talent in STEM; education; business and finance; health care; journalism; public and social service. Our promise—to power Silicon Valley—isn't just a marketing tagline. It's real.

I've spent much of the last year meeting our students, faculty and staff, alumni, and community leaders like you.

Before continuing, allow me to acknowledge two Spartans in the room.

Linda Sweeney teaches in our department of Nutrition, Food Science and Packaging, and helps coordinate a vital statewide program that trains child nutritionists. Linda, where are you?

And Marcia Daszko—where are you, Marcia?—received her Master of Science in Mass Communications at San Jose

State after earning a B.A. in English—*my* academic field—
from Santa Clara.

Based on what I've heard and seen from people like Marcia
and Linda, I am extremely confident that San Jose State can
be—and *should* be—America's preeminent urban public
university.

In other words, our promise is as inspiring as our legacy.
Let me explain.

First, our students are simply remarkable—resilient,
resourceful, determined. I have met many of them this year.
They know they have been blessed by a tremendous
opportunity, and they are fiercely determined to succeed.

They also are uncommonly committed to the common
good. Last month, they assisted with the showcasing on our
campus of a “Tiny House” that promises to help address a
pervasive regional homeless crisis.

This is just 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—committed, hands-on educators, like Linda—is uniquely dedicated to student success. Many university professors prefer research to teaching. Not ours.

Thanks to additional funding from the state and generosity from private donors, we expect to add as many as 130 new full-time faculty members this year, and next.

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. 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 are depending on us to supply the talent they need.

We understand that times have changed. Many students simply cannot complete a degree in four years. For some, family circumstances make it unworkable. For others, maintaining a full academic load while working is unsustainable.

And we would be abandoning our mission if we expected every student to give up a job or a family commitment.

But any student who is capable of moving at a faster academic pace should be able to do so. We've attacked this challenge on multiple fronts, investing in additional faculty and academic advisors, better technology, and more.

We also have made significant improvements to campus facilities, allowing us to better serve students, faculty and staff, and the community.

How many of you have visited our newly expanded and renovated Diaz Compean Student Union? It is *such* a

beautiful 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, adding capacity for 800 additional students to live on campus. A new recreation and aquatics center, where a couple of the old "bricks" dorms used to be, is under construction.

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

Speaking of the stadium, we are beyond excited about the future of Spartan football under the leadership of new head coach Brent Brennan. You should plan to join us this fall.

Intercollegiate athletics are an important investment in community engagement. Thanks to private support, we are comprehensively renovating our South campus athletic and

recreational facilities. The first phase, featuring a golf practice facility, is wrapping up.

But sports facilities are by no means our only priority. Here's a quiz: does anyone know when San Jose State last opened a new academic space?

The answer is: 1988. That's right. Three decades.

That finally is about to change. Some state support has enabled initial planning for an interdisciplinary science and innovation complex—kind of sensible for Silicon Valley's only public university, right?—and we now are working to secure private support to maximize the potential for this exciting project.

Another thing I've learned in my first year here is that there's precious little state support for capital improvements at our public universities, even as we continue to add students.

Amazingly, our community colleges—and even some high school districts—have an easier time securing public funding for *their* facilities than public universities.

That makes no sense. Four-year universities fuel innovation and supply the talent needed in a rapidly changing workforce. This hopefully will be addressed some day at a policy level. But for now, we're largely on our own.

Paul Lanning, our vice president for advancement who's joined me today, would be happy to talk with you about opportunities to partner with us.

There is much more to do if we are to meet the needs of our students and this region.

The Public Policy Institute of California last year projected that California needs 1.1 million *additional* college graduates by 2030 to keep up with our emerging workforce needs.

We want to do our part. I regularly meet with business and community leaders like you, as well as local, state and federal officials. I am heartened by their support for San Jose State, and mindful of their expectation that we contribute intellectually and concretely to meeting this region's needs.

Over a decade ago, San Jose State leaders pursued a strategic partnership with the city of San Jose on a big idea: a jointly-operated library. The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. library opened its doors in 2003. It remains a national model for university/civic collaboration.

Last year, San Jose State and the City of San Jose reached an agreement for the university to operate the downtown Hammer Theatre Center, restoring artistic and cultural programming and helping to revitalize the city's central core.

And I believe we can and should do more if we are to fulfill our promise as the premier American urban public university.

As you all know, this region faces significant housing and transportation challenges. In fact, I understand you'll welcome VTA's Nuria Fernandez in a couple of weeks. Nuria and I speak regularly, and I'm sure she will provide an informative update on regional transportation issues.

The passage of local housing and transportation ballot measures last November eventually will pay dividends, but we need systemic, long-term solutions. San Jose State has considerable intellectual and creative assets to bring to the table.

And beyond that, ours also is an essential voice in the critical conversation we must have about race and gender equity.

San Jose State now boasts 260,000 living alumni. At least two-thirds of them live and work in the Bay Area. I'd bet few of you—other than Marcia, who is a member of our alumni board—knew this. Far too many are unaware of our legacy, impact, or promise.

That will change. Being a premier urban public university means reaching beyond traditional borders, stepping out of our comfort zone, and being an engaged community partner.

A community leader recently asked me if I had a five-year plan for the university. I told him that we are about to begin working on a *ten-year* strategic plan, and ought to be imagining a *twenty-five* year plan.

And I was serious. First-generation mobile phones were introduced barely two decades ago. Facebook didn't exist fourteen years ago. Uber officially launched just seven years ago. And, be honest—did we *ever* imagine cars would drive themselves?

Change is no longer incremental. It is exponential. We need to be thinking and planning *now* if we are to effectively serve the needs of a region that will surely look very different within a few years 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 over the long term.

And that is why we are looking to extend our presence beyond our campus, where we're close to landlocked.

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

Again, thank you inviting me to be with you today. Time permitting, I am happy to entertain a few questions.

