

Fall Welcome Address
President Don W. Kassing
August 22, 2007
Morris E. Dailey Auditorium

Good afternoon, welcome back and thanks for being here today. As we gather here, I sense a new energy beginning to surface. It is there each fall as we greet our friends and colleagues after the summer break. We in the academic world traditionally view the fall as a time of new beginnings. I look out this afternoon and I see you as an impressive collection of talent that says, “Let’s see what we can do with a new group of students who have chosen our university to further their dreams and aspirations.”

We are drawn together by a very special common bond—supporting new and returning students in their quest for success and a better life. So welcome back and thank you for the wonderful way you embrace this work we do.

Before I begin my remarks this morning, I would like to acknowledge those who helped put this event together. So join me in thanking Zayna Fakhreddine from my office and Sylvia Light from University Advancement, who, by the way, prepared the material for the slide show on our 150th anniversary that was showing before we began, and who prepared the stage for today’s event. I also want to thank Mansi Bhatia and Rigo Vargas from University Advancement and Keith Sanders from Academic Technology.

Let me start with my own personal welcome to our new faculty this afternoon. I had a chance to meet them last night and I am impressed. Congratulations to the deans, department chairs and the faculty committees for bringing these wonderful people to our university. So...welcome to a very special place at a very special time.

It is a tradition at this event for me to introduce the new administrators who have joined us since this time last year. Some are brand new talented people who have decided to join up with this outfit, and some are talented people who were already here and have been selected to lead important units within the university. There are a number of common threads that run through and connect these people that I want to introduce and recognize.

They believe in creating the best long-term results for our university. They bring an uncommon commitment to the work we have started, and they want to be a part of that effort. As you get to know them, you will find they act with a certain quiet,

calm determination that suggests they really believe that this is a special place. So let me begin:

Deans

- Barbara Conry, interim dean for the College of Applied Sciences and Arts
- Nancie Fimbel, interim dean for the College of Business

AVPs

- Colleen Brown, interim AVP for Enrollment and Academic Services
- Larry Carr, AVP for Public Affairs
- Becka Paulsen, AVP for Finance

Associate Deans

- Steve Branz, associate dean, College of Science
- Elaine Chin, associate dean, College of Education
- Debra David, associate dean for First Year Experience
- Thom Huebner, associate dean, College of Humanities and the Arts
- Gregory Payne, associate dean, College of Applied Sciences and Arts
- George Vasquez, associate dean, Social Science

Other MPPs: Please stand, hold applause:

- Sal Campos, Shipping & Receiving manager
- Arthur Dunklin, Equal Opportunity manager
- Dennis Hungridge, Class/Comp manager
- Pam DeCosta, Women's Basketball coach
- Tom Hastings, director of media relations in Athletics
- Tiffany Lofton, Athletics major gifts officer
- Brian Bates, associate director of the Alumni Association
- Maryann Fox, director of advancement events
- Laura Henderson, director of development, College of Applied Sciences and Arts
- Anne Johnson, executive director of development
- Janikke Klem, director of development for Student Affairs
- Maria Ramirez, advancement services manager
- Paul Richardson, interim director of the Alumni Association
- Leslie Rohn, Tower Foundation controller

- Lisa Scoffield, director of corporate & foundation giving
- Stephanie Wick, director of development for the College of Education
- Craig Chan, assistant director of employer services in the Career Center
- Delia Chavez, acting manager in Evaluations
- Fernanda Karp, acting manager in Undergraduate Admissions
- Julie Sedlemeyer, assistant director, Student Services

- Terri Thames, interim director of Counseling Services

It is also our tradition to introduce the Associated Students Officers. An important part of our shared governance process is the role Associated Students plays. They are bright, serious, participating citizens of the university and I would like you to join me in recognizing them.

The Associated Student Board:

- Benjamin Henderson, President
- Jessica Hernandez, Vice President
- Jessica Loebig, Controller

I've been looking forward to this year. As I prepared for today, I thought, what a long way we've come since the fall of 2004. As that semester began, we had just lost a president after two weeks following two consecutive presidential searches. It was a moment of uncertainty for people both on and off campus.

At the time I remember saying to you:

“We are a strong and resilient campus, and our job is to move ahead with confidence.” I asked you to help make it a time that people would look back on with admiration for how we handled ourselves when faced with the unexpected. I knew what this campus was capable of if we concentrated our efforts. It was our time and—a time to lead ... and you did not disappoint.

By working together, and by making an exceptional effort, we have achieved a very powerful momentum and new self-confidence.

[\[MULTIMEDIA: Photo of Lance Armstrong\]](#)

People still tease me about a story I told at this event in 2005 about Lance Armstrong, and how, like that champion cyclist, I felt this campus was performing at an exceptional level and riding “up out of the saddle.” I saw examples of that kind of effort in many places on campus. That was exciting to me.

I wanted to do a good job of explaining that Lance Armstrong analogy to you, and I guess I explained it to death. BUT ... today, faculty and staff still come to me and let me know they are working “out of the saddle.”

And so the momentum continues and people have noticed.

In July, we received an outstanding letter from WASC Executive Director Ralph Wolff, with word of our reaccreditation. Let me quote from the letter:

“The Commission would like to extend its commendation to the San José State University community on the truly remarkable distance it has traveled since fall 2004. The team report notes ‘significant progress’ in assessment of student learning and enrollment management; the positive influence of recent appointments at the senior level; an operational strategic plan; innovative new programs for student success; and above all, dramatic changes in culture, energy and focus on campus.”

I’d like to give special recognition to the WASC Team, and the hundreds of faculty and staff members who moved our process forward. The WASC report made special mention of how engaged this campus was. Thanks to all of you who gave us your best insight and creativity in addressing challenges and developing new initiatives.

Let me introduce and recognize an outstanding group of administrators and faculty who were our core WASC team:

- Bob Cooper, AVP for Undergraduate Studies
- Kathy Roe, Health Science chair
- Bethany Shifflett, interim chair of the newly merged Hospitality, Recreation, and Tourism Management Department
- Beth Von Till, lecturer and Communication Studies lab director
- (ask the rest of the WASC team to stand)

And finally a special thank you to Carmen Sigler for her leadership on the entire accreditation effort. Carmen did this so well she has been asked to be a commissioner on WASC.

So momentum continues as we celebrate our 150th anniversary.

It began with our January kick-off event in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library with more than 600 people in attendance. The historical exhibit was creatively designed and prepared by the special collection library staff and the Advancement team.

This exhibit became the center of recollections and reflections of our history and of our impact and contributions to this city, region and nation.

In March, a concert in conjunction with Symphony Silicon Valley and Opera San José was held at the California Theatre. This event spotlighted our students and alumni. It also emphasized our university's role in the arts community and the importance of that role to the city of San José. The evening was a wonderful source of pride as we watched and listened to our graduates perform, and we had a chance to appreciate their leadership in the arts.

Also, in March we announced the Chuck Davidson gift of \$15 million to the College of Engineering. Chuck is an amazingly generous man who believes in our faculty and our students. Dean Belle Wei and Development Officer Lina Melkonian deserve enormous credit for persuading him to invest in us.

In May, we celebrated our Founders' Day. It was a wonderful rainy day. The ceremony at the City Hall Rotunda highlighted our fundamental relationship with our home town and the affection this city has for its university. It also highlighted the important role we play in this region and in this state and within the CSU. If you were there you may have had a chance to meet Raven Minns who is the great-great-great granddaughter of our founder George W. Minns.

Back on campus we were the center of a stimulating discussion about the future of higher education featuring Margaret Spellings, the secretary of education, and a distinguished panel of scholars.

And finally, we announced a \$10 million gift to the College of Education from Connie Lurie. Connie, like Chuck Davidson believes in our faculty and students and the critical role we play in this region.

Over and over, the comments flooding back to us on this collection of celebrations and events are that it makes people feel very proud of their association with our university.

I would like the campus team that organized all of these events to stand. You guys are terrific.

- Alyssa Byrkit
- Larry Carr
- Maryann Fox
- Pat Harris
- Chris Hicks-Riley
- Anne Johnson
- Sylvia Light
- Anthony Montano
- Danelle Moon
- Annette Nellen
- Eunice Ockerman
- Jonathan Roth
- Lisa Scoffield
- Jody Ulate

This pride and the way our alumni and friends have recognized the worth of what we are doing has created great momentum in how they are investing in us.

Giving in 06-07 totaled \$49 Million, an 86% increase over last year and the single biggest year in our history. We had two college naming gifts: for the College of Engineering from Chuck Davidson and for the College of Education from Connie Lurie. We are the only CSU ever to receive two college-naming gifts of this size in one year.

We increased the SJSU endowment to \$46M, for a 16% increase. So I want to provide special recognition to Fred Najjar and his development team; to Deans Belle Wei and Susan Meyers, the other deans and department chairs and faculty who played key roles in this fundraising success, and finally to Athletic Director Tom Bowen, who had another outstanding fundraising year. It doesn't hurt to go to a Bowl game.

In addition, our Research Foundation saw a 36% increase in research awards to our faculty programs, representing over \$56.7 million.

There were other successes last year all over the university. There has been exceptional work done in the Student Affairs division. In my view, that division is functioning better than at any time in the fourteen years I have been here. Veril, thanks to you and your crew. Thanks also to Rose Lee who continues to keep us financially sound. She is the best CFO in the system.

There are many others I could mention but it is a long and growing list. You know who you are and we all have a great deal to be proud of. I hope each of you will take a moment to recognize your individual contributions to all we've accomplished.

Now let's talk about what lies ahead and how we take advantage of the momentum we have created.

You know I'm a fan of track and field. Some of you are smiling. Yes, I have another sports analogy for you and I might even have a video clip for you!

One of my favorite races in track and field is the 4 X 100 relay. It is a very, very fast race. One full lap of the track, 400 meters, is covered in about 37-38 seconds when you're watching a world class race. Judith and I have run into each other in fitness centers while traveling and we both try our hand at the treadmill. Judith and I would be lucky to run that 400 meters in 80 seconds. So a good relay team could run two relays races by the time Judith and I finished a lap... but I digress. So let's get back to the analogy.

It is customary to set your relay team legs by putting your fastest runner on the anchor, or last leg and your second fastest runner on the first leg. That has been the practice for years.

However, a number of years ago I was watching a 4X100 relay race with some friends when I overheard a conversation between two other spectators. As the teams were getting into starting blocks, the man next to me asked the guy next to him, "Who's the breaker man." I immediately turned and asked, "What's a breaker man?"

Well, it turns out the breaker man is the second leg and this theory is that you put your best runner on the second leg and take advantage of the back stretch.

Now I have an animation prepared by Jody Ulate, from Advancement, to show you how it works. Remember the runners will have a staggered start to offset the width of the track. There is some geometry at play here.

So, to show you how the race works and what the breaker man does, let's look at the animation.

[MULTIMEDIA: [Animation of 4 X 100 relay race](#)]

The result is: The breaker man can break open the race on the backstretch and set up a win. It doesn't show up until the anchor leg breaks the curve. Usually it is very difficult to see and only the most sophisticated track observers may see it. It is too fast and the staggers create confusion for the normal viewer.

Now, to emphasize this phenomenon, I have a video of a live race.

[MULTIMEDIA: [Video clip of 4 X 100 relay race](#)]

Despite being in slow motion you can see all the action and how fast the race is. But the key is the race can be won in the back stretch by putting your best person there. I will only show you the first two legs

Okay, so where is the analogy?

It occurred to me that throughout San José State's history, there have been groups of people who functioned as a breaker team in order to move the university ahead. It might have been difficult to see it at the time, but the results showed up later and told the story.

I believe that's what's happening on this campus now. I think you're the breaker team. We've put in an incredible effort—at an unexpected time—and we have more to do.

There's something unselfish about the way this work is done. There is a sense that everyone is working for the good of the university, that there may be no immediate acknowledgement of the work we are doing, but that there will be benefits to come, for the university and for our students. As a result, there's an uncommon intensity about what we're achieving and where we're going.

I think that has been the secret to our success over the last three years. We are a breaker team. I want to suggest that instinct is in all of you and encourage our new members to share that intensity.

So, as we turn our thoughts to the work for this year, I encourage you to keep these images in mind:

We have the ability to get “up out of the saddle.” And I am convinced you are a “breaker team,” and together we have the opportunity to set the stage and build a platform for the future.

The work we accomplished last year, we did as a community. And as Judith told us earlier, “community” is the shared value we will be highlighting this academic year.

In the last two years we have focused on the value of “student success” and the value of “diversity.” There is a common thread that runs through all three of these values. They are linked together and they are a continuum.

Again, as Judith mentioned, as we come back to class we will heighten our sense of community with our Reading Group project. The campus reading program was started a few years ago and I feel it is one of the best things we have ever done. We had a great success last year with *The Kite Runner*.

The university has given all of the new freshmen a copy of ZZ Packer’s *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere*, the next selection for the campus reading program. It is a wonderful collection of short stories by an exciting young author, who should stimulate great discussions and bring us together as a community. I encourage you to get yourself a copy and join us in a community effort and engage in the conversations.

In a broader context, we are part of the community of this city. The city and the university are growing, gaining exposure, reaching new levels side by side, to our mutual benefit.

You probably know that San José is the largest city in the Bay Area and 10th largest in the nation. But did you know that one third of all venture capital invested in the U.S. is invested in companies in the San José area? Or that San José leads the nation in patent generation? Or that San José was ranked #1 out of 125 regions

in a study measuring knowledge capacity, capability and sustainability, and the extent to which this knowledge is translated into economic value and wealth?

Given this profile, it's not really surprising to learn that the city population is exceptionally well-educated. More than 40 percent of the workforce has a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 25 percent nationally. All of this works to our advantage.

In May, CEOs for Cities, a network of urban leaders convened a meeting in San José. Discussion centered around the belief that partnerships and creativity are necessary to leverage existing resources to stimulate vibrant cities. Most U.S. cities have extensive civic, cultural and intellectual assets—assets often embodied in what are known as anchor institutions. Our university is an anchor institution.

As such we contribute to the culture, economy and the vitality of San José and can be instrumental in shaping the city's future, as well as our own. Anchor institutions at their best have the opportunity to energize an entire city.

Let me offer an example. Our Graduate School of Library and Information Science was awarded its largest grant ever, over \$943,000, with funds coming from First Lady Laura Bush's 21st Century Librarian Program, to support 15 recipients representing people of color and underserved communities with full scholarships, expense stipends and other critical tools and resources that enable them to be our nation's next generation of leaders in library services.

Our congratulations to Dean Ruth Kifer, Dr. Mary Somerville and their team who will be partnered with the City of San José Public Library and National Hispanic University on this historic and significant initiative.

In addition to being an anchor institution, our strong relationship with Silicon Valley makes us part of the international community. People all over the world who don't know the location of other major cities, DO know about San José and San José State because of Silicon Valley.

Altogether, we couldn't be in a better location to strengthen and reinforce our strategic vision and goals. Increasingly, as we advance, I believe we'll find ourselves being compared by national observers to such anchor institutions as the University of Louisville, Boston College, University of Cincinnati and the University of Pittsburgh. These are distinctive universities that also have a rich and

vibrant relationship with their home cities. This will be a new and different frame of reference for us, one that we can benefit from enormously.

Now let's talk briefly about other things we intend to accomplish this year.

First, we will follow up on recommendations in the WASC report. We should be proud of having achieved the milestone of reaccreditation. But as a learning organization, I know Carmen would join me in saying we need to remain focused on improvement. We need to keep in mind the key issues that we identified during the preparation of the Educational Effectiveness Report, as well as the recommendations from the WASC Team and the Commission.

For example, we will assess our Strategic Planning process with the goal of sharpening our priorities and continuing to align resources to achieve Vision 2010. We also need to prioritize and determine how to institutionalize our most successful and promising efforts. The campus strategic planning process was intentionally designed to be iterative and assessment was built into the senate policy. As Judith mentioned, we are exactly at mid-point in that planning cycle and at the right time to engage in assessment. The Senate Executive Committee, working in close collaboration with the University Planning Council, has initiated this process. We will also move forward on assessment of student learning at the program, college, and institutional levels focusing on learning results and actions taken to improve results.

As a campus we have always prided ourselves on our uncompromising commitment to access and our ability to transform lives by providing first-generation college students with a quality, affordable education.

We are, in fact, one of the top 15 most diverse campuses in the Western region, according to this year's U.S. News and World Report. Our diversity makes us unique, strong, and distinctive from neighboring universities. However, providing access is only the beginning. We know that the achievement gap is a serious and real problem—a challenge not only for us, but for the state of California and the nation.

This year, we will continue to build on our diversity work by unveiling and implementing an Inclusive Excellence master plan that will deeply embed and institutionalize diversity as a valued educational resource and an ingredient for every student's success.

The Inclusive Excellence master plan will guide us in creating the conditions, programs and infrastructure through which students from varied backgrounds and life experiences can attain the highest level of academic achievement at this institution. That means getting here, staying here and succeeding here.

The goal is to help them become the best scholars and citizens in the country. With this goal in mind, we will enhance and improve advisement and retention efforts, and we will establish benchmarks and targets for student retention and graduation rates.

This plan will help shape a supportive, positive and productive climate for all employees of this university. It will enable faculty members of diverse backgrounds to succeed and prosper in their teaching and research. And it will create a dialogic environment in which the issue of diversity is everybody's business, everybody's benefit and everybody's concern.

San José State University won't be an institution that merely counts off the diversity numbers and calls it a day. We will be an educational institution that does not merely *talk the talk of diversity but walks the walk*—pushing diversity to be about academic rigor and success, to be about establishing an inclusive learning environment based on intercultural respect and understanding, and a focus on faculty, students, and staff as diverse knowers. If we are successful in our efforts, we will move from ACCESS to SUCCESS for all our students.

Last May, I announced that Dr. Rona Halualani had been asked to lead our Strategic Planning process. In addition, I asked Rona to lead our efforts to build an Inclusive Excellence master plan. This was an idea generated in the President's Reading Group last spring. Rona has been busy this summer preparing the opening draft of the master plan. In September, expect to be drawn to discussions to shape the core planning concepts of this master plan.

Another high priority for this year is our work with the CSU system to ensure that all programs and services we provide through computer or electronic media are accessible to people with disabilities.

Heading this effort since last January is the Accessible Technology Initiative Task Force, with separate teams working on accessibility for:

- our Web site,
- our instructional materials, both printed and online, and

- all electronic equipment purchased, from hardware to software to copiers and fax machines.

That is a huge waterfront, if you think about it. In each of these areas, we are meeting major deadlines for progress.

For example, we identified 53 student-critical Web pages on our SJSU Web site, assessed those sites and made needed changes so that people with disabilities don't encounter obstacles in using them. As of September 1, all new Web sites must meet that same standard. I'd like to recognize the work of the task force and the three teams during spring and summer. You can get more details about this project on our Web site.

Now, let me conclude by summarizing the key goals for this year:

1. The institution value I ask you to focus on this year is "community."
 - Become part of the campus reading program effort
 - Develop and reinforce the community efforts in your department, colleges and divisions.
 - Remember "great cities have great universities." We are an anchor institution in San José and we share a responsibility for making this city great.
2. Let's follow up on the WASC recommendations. There is still important work to do there.
3. Let's insure that all programs and services we provide through computer or electronic media are accessible to people with disabilities. You will receive new guidelines. I ask that you learn them, implement them and work with others to bring about these important changes.
4. We will build an Inclusive Excellence master plan this year. Join in and help us make it a national model.
5. We also want to continue to demonstrate that we are a place so dynamic, so committed that people will want to join up with us—bright new students and faculty, outstanding staff and alumni who want to be part of what's happening here.

Although we will emphasize these five goals, they are not intended to reflect everything we have to do. There are other goals we are working on in each division and we will continue to work on them.

I know that the momentum we have generated together will continue. The word is out about the exciting things happening here, the message is being heard.

People are talking about us differently, with more interest and more respect. Here's part of a note written to Sylvia Light in Advancement on the 150th by Janet Clair a faculty member in Kinesiology:

“Being reminded about the rich history of this institution has renewed my appreciation of the time I spent here as a student, and now as a faculty member. I have a new sense of pride. Thank you for that.”

It's your hard work that got this renewed respect going. And it will be your hard work that takes San José State to the next level.

Please join me in making this another remarkable year. We know what we need to do, and the early results are extremely promising. Let's go to work!