President’s Fall Address

Good Afternoon, everyone! Welcome to the beginning of the new academic year.

As we begin, please take a look around this beautiful space, in this new section of our Student Union.

It has been a long time coming, and well worth the wait. Do you agree?

We had many capital improvement projects. Many of us have discovered new paths from points “A” to “B” navigating around these badly needed renovations. Some of us have visited places we had not been before!

Our students, faculty and staff deserve the best facilities we can provide. The renovations underway will help. More improvements are on the way. You’ll hear more about them in the coming year.

Speaking of the coming year: each fall brings palpable energy, optimism and spirit to our campus.

This week, we officially welcome thousands of newly matriculated Spartans and all returning students. Would any students with us today please stand so that we can welcome you?

Students: you are the reason why we are here.

I am also grateful to the faculty, staff and administrators who support our students. If you’ve joined our campus in the last year, please stand so that we can welcome YOU.

We will all have an opportunity to share our Spartan spirit tomorrow evening when our football team kicks off its season against North Dakota at Spartan Stadium. I’ll be there, and hope you will as well.

Our roots date back to 1857, as a fledgling “normal school” that offered evening classes to aspiring teachers in San Francisco. Five years later, we
planted our roots in San Jose. Today we enter our 158th year of service to Silicon Valley, California and the world.

**Our heritage is one of being, and becoming.** Occasionally, it is useful to look to the past to inspire our future.

If we could study this university’s DNA as scientists study the genome, we would find strands linking regional stewardship, social justice, shared mission and student success.

Last year’s unconscionable treatment of one of our students in a residence hall shocked us all. Our governance issues have led us to reexamine our values, relationships and aspirations.

These and other issues created significant challenges. We should, and will, be judged by how we respond.

While our construction fences on campus need to stay up for a while, it is time that the invisible fences we have built around ourselves come down.

As we begin a new year, let us follow in the footsteps of courageous Spartans who, when challenged, acted not out of self-interest but rather out of deep concern for the university, community and fellow citizens.

Some of these names are familiar. But their stories are remarkable, and deserve to be retold.

San Jose State has fought racism for decades. In fall 1967, alumnus and former Spartan discus thrower Harry Edwards galvanized a group of African American athletes in protest against racial segregation. *The Olympic Project for Human Rights* sought a boycott of the 1968 summer Olympics.

Meanwhile, J. Benton White had come to San Jose State from Alabama to become director of the Wesley Foundation—a Methodist campus ministry. The foundation and others had discovered discrimination against African American student athletes in area housing.

To examine student grievances in 1967, university president Robert Clark announced the creation of an ombudsman position, the first of its kind in an American university.
The notion of a student ombudsman was introduced to President Clark by two professors and then-senate executive committee members: the late Ted Norton and Peter Buzanski.

That day, Benton White congratulated President Clark for creating an ombudsman. In response, President Clark told White, “I am glad that you are pleased with the decision because you will be our first ombudsman!”

Ladies and gentlemen, please remember this story when you propose new initiatives!

The new ombudsman created a “fair housing seal” that local property owners could display IF they signed a non-discrimination pledge. The seal certified property owners as welcoming to all tenants, regardless of race.

Next, Edwards and White focused on fraternities and sororities suspected of discriminating against pledges based on race. The targeted organizations were told to stop, or be stripped of official campus recognition.

This action sent shockwaves through national Greek organizations. Change came slowly, but change came. And the roots were at San Jose State.

Subsequent campus ombudsmen included current U.S. Representative Mike Honda; long-time faculty member and academic administrator Charlie Whitcomb; beloved retired student affairs administrator ST. Saffold, and dedicated administrator for equal employment opportunity and affirmative action Beverly Miles, among others.

The impact of Spartans on the fight for racial equality extended far beyond this campus. In March 1968, just months before the Mexico City Summer Olympics, author Dick Drake listed the twenty or so record-setting sprinters who had trained in San Jose. Drake coined the label “Speed City.”

Two of those sprinters were Spartans Tommie Smith and John Carlos. Most of us pass by their statues every day. But we should pause to consider their bravery, in context of the times.
As Harry Edwards pushed for an Olympic boycott, Smith and Carlos realized the Games were a global platform for their message. They elected not to boycott—in itself, a courageous act.

Then, while on the medal stand, they took the world-rocking step commemorated by the statue.

Smith and Carlos sacrificed limitless personal opportunities for a cause that, to them, mattered most.

They both paid a huge price.

Despite President Clark’s efforts, the city of San Jose all but ignored their Olympic success, let alone their personal bravery.

At a dinner sponsored by the local African American community, President Clark and his wife Opel were joined by one other white couple. One.

The struggle for racial equality continued. Spartans responded.

In 1971, funding for the Educational Opportunity Program was at risk of being repealed by then-Governor Reagan. Over spring break, hundreds of students marched from San Jose to Sacramento in protest. They slept on the ground, eating as they walked.

Gabe Reyes, a Vietnam Veteran and campus administrator, helped the students prepare for the journey. In the end, the EOP funding was sustained.

There were many other, less heralded acts. While Cesar Chavez organized farmworkers, San Jose State students organized a grape boycott at a nearby Lucky supermarket on Santa Clara Street. The store took grapes off of its shelves.

Renowned playwright Luis Valdez was a childhood friend of Chavez and another distinguished Spartan. Valdez established a farm worker theater troupe, El Teatro Campesino, Theater of the Farm Workers. In field after field in the central Valley, Valdez fought, quietly, for farm worker rights.
Many of you know something about Yosh Uchida. His life embodies what it means to be Spartan. A child of an immigrant farm worker, Uchida in 1940 was both a San Jose student and student coach.

He was drafted into the U.S. Army during WWII, while members of his own family were sent to internment camps. They were processed on this campus, in the building now named Uchida Hall.

After the war, Yosh returned to us as a student. After earning his degree in biological sciences in 1947, he coached judo part-time while running a medical laboratory services business for 32 years.

Entrepreneur. Recruiter. Donor. Civic leader. Military veteran. Coach. Yosh Uchida was all these. But his work to advance judo as a mainstream competitive sport might best embody his Spartan grit.

Yosh saw judo as a competitive sport, not just a martial art. In the 1950s, that was not mainstream thinking.

He worked closely with Berkeley judo coach Henry Stone. Together, they lobbied the Amateur Athletic Union and in 1953, it embraced judo as an amateur sport. A decade later, it was an Olympic sport.

In 1962, San Jose State won the inaugural national collegiate judo championship. Now, much is deservedly made of UCLA’s ten national titles in men’s basketball. I would note that San Jose State has won 45 national collegiate titles in the 52 years since judo became a sanctioned college sport.

Spartans have greatly impacted the arts.

International opera star Irene Dalis is a Spartan, earning a music degree in 1946. An acclaimed, mezzo-soprano, Dalis performed with the New York Metropolitan Opera for two decades. She then returned to her alma mater as a music professor.

Dalis was not content to bask in her own success. Thanks largely to her perseverance, Opera San Jose launched in 1984. She developed outreach programs like “Let’s Make an Opera!” for local children to write and star in their own productions.
She is a cultural treasure. The *San Jose Mercury News* headlined a story on her retirement, “Irene Dalis, Opera San Jose's beloved grand diva, says goodbye.”

How many of you have heard of Charles Burdick? He was an eminent scholar and humanist, accomplished professor of military history, chair of our history department, and dean of our college of social sciences.

He was named the President’s Scholar in 1975 by President John Bunzel; twice named SJSU’s outstanding professor; twice named CSU’s outstanding professor.

Professor Burdick enlisted in the U.S. Army during World War II. He came home, earned his history degree from here in three years and his PhD from Stanford. A founding member of our history department, he was anointed by the students “King of the Classroom.”

But there was much more to Professor Burdick than his degrees and acclaim as a faculty member.

A student of post-World War II Germany, Professor Burdick meticulously documented that period, collecting many original materials and manuscripts and interviewing almost every surviving member of the German military.

His collection of 140 original World War II posters is on display at the Martin Luther King Library. The Burdick Military Project, supporting the study and teaching of military history, is named in his honor.

A final example of Spartan perseverance is the late Jay Pinson, dean of our College of Engineering from 1979 to 1994.

Dean-emeritus Pinson deserves mention because, beyond his academic leadership, he loved to tell San Jose State’s story.

In 1985 he launched *Project 88*, an ambitious capital initiative to renovate facilities and build what today is still called the “new” engineering building.

He analyzed where our engineering graduates were being hired. Then, he showed the likes of Lockheed, IBM, Hewlett Packard, General Electric, and
others that year after year, these Silicon Valley heavyweights were hiring *more than half of their engineers* from San Jose State.

Pinson demonstrated that San Jose State provided more talent to top Silicon Valley companies than all the other engineering schools in the U.S. and rest of the world combined.

He packaged this story into fourteen slides and hit the road, visiting Silicon Valley CEO’s, public officials, the Chancellor’s office, alumni groups and the media.

He wanted to raise $13 million from private sources. In 1985, that was the most ambitious capital goal among all CSU campuses. He wanted another thirty million dollars from the state.

By August 1988 Pinson had raised seventeen million dollars—four million more than his own audacious goal.

The “new” engineering building opened 26 years ago this month. Today, we are now known as a national leader in producing engineering talent. Our engineering programs are ranked number two nationally among peer institutions.

But data alone do not reveal our greatness. The late Robert Kennedy said, “The Gross National Product does not include the beauty of our poetry or the intelligence of our public debate. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion. It measures everything, in short, *except that which makes life worthwhile.*”


How are we sustaining our excellence, addressing today’s challenges and preparing for tomorrow’s opportunities?

We are helping students from underrepresented communities find pathways to college. Working with the Silicon Valley Educational Foundation, we are working with the patchwork quilt of Eastside school districts to increase student college-going rates from this long-underrepresented population.
Our goal is a guaranteed admission model for eligible students from these communities.

We have launched The Youth STEM Network, and Girls STEM Network, targeting more than 100 middle schools to motivate underserved youths and girls to study STEM in high school and pursue college degrees.

Today’s faculty, students, staff and young alums also carry the Spartan legacy of social justice.

Urban Studies Professor Dayana Salazar, as executive director of CommUniverCity San Jose, has turned our urban landscape into an experiential classroom, involving faculty, staff and students in a host of neighborhood partnerships.

CommUniverCity immerses Spartans in real-world growth opportunities and extends our reach and impact well beyond our predecessors’ imaginations.

Spartans are inspired to action inside our classrooms also. Sociology Professor Scott Myers-Lipton inspired students Marisela Castro and Leila McCabe to fight for a local minimum wage increase.

Castro and McCabe in 2012 helped pass Measure D, raising San Jose’s minimum wage from $8 to $10 an hour.

Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese said, “This campaign was successful because these San Jose State students did not take no for an answer.”

Just as J. Benton White, Luis Valdez, Jay Pinson and Yosh Uchida would not take “no” for an answer.

Persistence, grit, and self-determination are timeless Spartan traits, fueling San Jose State’s contributions to society for 158 years.

Those traits are just as critical to current students, who will leave this campus for a world vastly different than the one from which they entered.
Global wealth continues to consolidate. According to one economist, between 1983 and 2009 the top five percent of the population accumulated eighty percent of economic growth.

The world’s population flocks toward fewer, ever-denser urban areas. That makes urban-serving universities like ours more critical than ever to regional success.

Technology evolves faster than ever. The Internet is barely 25 years old. Can we imagine our lives without it?

Consider this: at current rates, it is possible that by 2020, robots will outnumber people.

These ideas are hard to get our heads around. But they are not fanciful. They are real.

Which is why these words from Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw, are relevant: “Progress is impossible without change. Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”

My colleagues, we are in the “mind-changing” business.

To help us succeed, I am committed to upgrading our facilities, classrooms, and gathering spaces. The next step is a comprehensive, strategic capital outlay plan.

To meet our data capacity needs, we are well on our way toward completing a campus-wide technology upgrade.

To help students progress toward their degrees, we are developing a comprehensive degree audit system.

To increase our capacity to teach, the current Academic Affairs budget model should allow the addition of 64 new tenure-track faculty members during the coming year, and 100 over the next three years.

As we have seen, our forbearers confronted countless challenges and made difficult, often unpopular choices.
The challenges of the past year were a wake-up call. As George Bernard-Shaw said, progress demands a change in how we act and think.

The campus dialogue that began last spring continues as we enter a new academic year.

We are working toward a new framework for campus governance.

We are implementing recommendations proposed by the special task force for racial discrimination.

The road ahead will not be easy, or simple. We will face setbacks, challenges and disappointments.

In the words of a Japanese proverb, even if we fall seven times, it is important to stand up the eighth time. It is time for Spartans to stand up.

Do we have the collective courage, commitment and audacity to stand up to our challenges?

Will we honor the courage of Harry Edwards, Tommie Smith, John Carlos, J. Benton White and Robert Clark?

Will we honor the persistence of Yosh Uchida, Luis Valdez, Jay Pinson, Marisela Castro and Leila McCabe?

Will we honor the scholarship and service of Irene Dalis, Charles Burdick, Dayana Salazar and Scott Meyers-Lipton?

I am confident that together, we will.

Here is to a great year. Thank you and Go Spartans!