Provost Update: Four Pillars Success is Measured Through Student Stories; ITS Creates Altamont Center to Engage Student Interns; High Achievers Recognized at 2017 Honors Convocation; Peer Connections Provides Resources and Support; Student Researchers Place at CSU-wide Competition in April; Spartans Meet Civil Rights Icon on Spring Break; Faculty and Staff Redesign Courses to Enhance Learning, Engagement; and Subscribe to the Academic Spotlight blog.

As we end another academic year, I am pleased to share the progress we have made on one of our top priorities – student success. This spring, Vice President for Student Affairs Reggie Blaylock and I updated SJSU’s Four Pillars of Student Success: College Readiness, Advising, Student Engagement and Clearing Bottlenecks, a plan informed by many campus
stakeholders who helped us to identify initiatives that will move us toward improving graduation rates, retention, student experience, and preparing our graduates to pursue advanced degrees or to thrive in their careers.

Our 2016 graduation rates, reported in the fall, show that we are steadily moving toward our 2025 graduation goals. We improved our first-time freshmen graduation rate from 10 percent to 14 percent; our six-year graduation rates improved from 57 percent to 62 percent; and we decreased the achievement gap between our underrepresented minority students and their peers from 17 percent to 11 percent.

Other indicators show that we continue to make progress in shortening the time to degree for students. For spring 2017, 36 percent of our undergraduate students enrolled in 15 units or more, up from 25 percent in fall 2015. We have offered additional courses to clear bottlenecks and hired more advisors while increasing awareness that students need to complete 15 units each semester to stay on track to graduate on time. The Office of Student and Faculty Success launched their #FinishinFour and #TakeTwo campaigns during orientation sessions last summer and worked hard to inform students that to graduate in four years for first-time freshmen or two years for transfer students, they need to take 15 units a semester. These communication efforts doubled the number of first-time students taking 15 units. Our efforts are showing returns and undergraduate average unit load is already trending upward.

We still have much work ahead to meet the ambitious goals of eliminating our achievement gap entirely and graduating 35 percent of our first-time freshmen in four years by 2025. I have confidence that as we continue many of the initiatives launched this year, we will meet these goals (see monthly updates online).

In addition to supporting students once they enroll, we are also looking at ways to partner with K-12 and community colleges to prepare students for university coursework. Reggie and I co-hosted two student success summits with Assemblymembers Evan Low and Ash Kalra that brought together partners from community colleges, K-12 and nonprofits to
discuss the ways we can work together to ensure students are prepared for college-level math and English when they arrive at CSU campuses. We have created working groups around three key areas in which SJSU faculty, staff and administrators will partner with local high schools: summer initiatives for high school students; teacher professional development; and college readiness presentations for school boards. I look forward to reporting more in the fall after we launch pilot programs in each area.

While we are measuring much of our progress in numbers, students' personal stories are also marks of our success. I am pleased to share with you some of the ways our Four Pillars plan is supporting students – from ITS’s internship for students who are using predictive analytics to improve advising processes to the African-American Student Success Task Force’s alternative spring break and Chicanx/Latinx posole study breaks to the record number of students who were recognized for high achievement at this year’s Honors Convocation on April 28 – these student experiences are the reasons we remain dedicated to our plan.

Sincerely,

Andy Feinstein
Provost and Senior VP for Academic Affairs

ITS Creates Altamont Center to Engage Student Interns
Dana Nehoran, a faculty member in the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business and a staff member in ITS, right, works with student intern Nazia Khan on a predictive analytics project.

By Barry Zepel

Classroom-based learning provides the foundation for earning a degree; learning in a hands-on, real-life setting sharpens skills to prepare a student for a career.

That is just one part of the strategy behind the creation of the Altamont Center in Information Technology Services (ITS) at San Jose State University, where 16 students majoring in a variety of disciplines are completing internships that help them develop the marketable skills desired by corporations and other organizations in Silicon Valley. Interns work on projects involving data science, business intelligence, technical writing, software testing, software development and project management. Of the students, seven are undergraduates and nine are completing graduate degrees.

The students – who are in disciplines ranging from management information systems (MIS) to computer science to engineering to statistics – work closely with ITS staff on projects that move forward the goals of the department. The strategy is in line with SJSU’s Four Pillars of Student Success plan, with initiatives that support student engagement as a key pillar. Dana Nehoran, who serves as both a faculty member in the Lucas College and Graduate School of
Business and a staff member in ITS, proposed the idea a year ago as a way to engage students through internships.

“The center employs students who are able to work on technical tasks related to their areas of study, while they also help achieve important goals and make a lasting impact on the campus community,” Nehoran explained. “Our student interns take part in essential projects that help SJSU provide more effective services for the entire student body.”

The students are mentored and supervised by full-time ITS staff members. The team Nehoran moves SJSU’s Four Pillars plan forward by identifying obstacles to student success, such as financial hardships, advising processes or inability to register for needed classes. The university can then focus resources on the areas that will have the most impact on improving graduation and retention rates. The interns are compiling and analyzing data, and ITS will distribute reports to help campus administrators make decisions about student success initiatives.

Together, the Altamont interns are providing San Jose State with predictive analytics. Nehoran describes it as “a discipline that attempts to make useful predictions about the future based on statistical analysis of historical data.”

“From the ITS point of view, we have this wealth of knowledge and capacity in these students,” said Bob Wrenn, SJSU’s interim chief information officer who oversees the department. “We have a lot of work to do here and we have a finite amount of resources to get it done. I can get students here who are highly trained and highly available; they’re on site and help complete the work we need done.”

The interns play an important role in the department, according to Wrenn.

“They are delivering real-life value working side-by-side with my permanent, full-time staff, who serve as their mentors and supervisors,” he noted.

Nehoran said the interns’ use of predictive analytics could have a positive impact for thousands of their fellow SJSU students, of whom 14 percent graduate in four years with the university focused on increasing that to 35 percent by 2025. The interns are analyzing historical information to find patterns that help identify students at risk of not completing a degree in a timely manner with the objective of enabling the appropriate campus services to provide proactive intervention.

While the interns realize that the “real-life experience” they’re getting will help them when seeking their first jobs after graduation, that isn’t all that is inspiring
and exciting them.

“What we do here is going to add value to the campus community,” said Ryan Quigley, a second-year graduate student majoring in statistics. “We’re working under the umbrella of predictive analytics, which is using the data that the university has, to make predictions that are going to be beneficial to students’ lives.”

“Our main goal as Altamont Center interns is to make sure that the university’s resources are allocated efficiently. We don’t want (administrators) opening up class sections that are going to be empty, and we don’t want them closing sections that are going to be in high demand,” noted Quigley, who has already been offered a full-time position with a San Francisco-based financial institution as a result of his Altamont Center experience.

The internship program has had a profound impact on Nazia Khan, who like Quigley is a second-year master’s student and statistics major.

“I am totally a different person since I started (at the Altamont Center),” said Khan, who spent two years as a teacher in her native India after completing her undergraduate studies there. “I have more experience and confidence that I can survive in industry because of Dana Nehoran and the Altamont Center. I’m working on something that I am passionate and excited about because I am helping students to acquire their degrees and complete their education while helping to prevent them from dropping out because of emotional or financial reasons. We are able to help them by providing data to the professionals on campus responsible for directly helping those students.”

Additional information about the Altamont Center internships in the ITS Department is available by contacting Nehoran at dana.nehoran@sjsu.edu.

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**High Achievers Recognized at 2017 Honors Convocation**
Kinalani Hoe poses with her certificate at the 2017 Honors Convocation, where more than 4,300 students were recognized for achieving GPAs of 3.65 or higher.

By Barry Zepel

San Jose State University recognized the outstanding academic achievements of 4,338 students, a record number, at its 55th Annual Honors Convocation on April 28. A capacity crowd – including family, friends, faculty and staff members – filled the Events Center, to hear words of encouragement and inspiration.

Some of those words came from Persis Karim, honored as the university’s 2017 Outstanding Professor and keynote speaker for the evening.

“Please don’t underestimate the power you have to affect this world and to affect and change the lives of other people,” said Karim, professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature in the College of Humanities and the Arts.

Karim, also the founding director of Persian Studies, directed her comments to the 430 President’s Scholars and 3,908 Dean’s Scholars from all colleges on campus. President’s Scholars are undergraduate students who have earned a 4.0 grade point average in at least two contiguous semesters of the three prior to the honors convocation. Dean’s Scholars are undergrads earning at least a 3.65 GPA in at least two contiguous semesters of the past three.
Among the honored students were 62 Spartan student-athletes, also a record total, with six earning President’s Scholar recognition. It was the third year in a row that a record number of students involved in Intercollegiate Athletics achieved the rank of Dean’s or President’s Scholars.

"Teaching is a two-way street," Karim said. “Your journey here shapes and influences us, your professors. I pride myself on being a teacher who seeks to make an engaging and meaningful classroom experience where I set a high premium on students’ free expression and their ability to discover and articulate their voices."

Many of the 2016-2017 scholars were proud to share how San Jose State affected their lives and to name educators who especially helped them on their successful paths.

Anna Adaska, President’s Scholar and dance major from the College of Humanities and the Arts, said “an experience that shaped who I am today would be my first performance with SJSU’s contemporary performing company, University Dance Theater. Our director, Raphael Boumalia, changed the way I viewed performing permanently... After speaking with Professor Boumalia, I viewed performing as an experience that is shared by the audience and performer, in which the performer's only obligation is to share their art honestly.”

Eulises Valdovinos, President’s Scholar and industrial & systems engineering major from the Charles W. Davidson College of Engineering, said being recognized by SJSU “is not only a huge honor, it is also a constant reminder that my family members’ sacrifices as well as the struggles of previous generations who fought for my education have not been in vain. Blanca Sanchez-Cruz (assistant director for student support programs for the SJSU Engineering Student Success Center) contributed so much to my success as a student, and even as I entered the professional world.”

Sanchez-Cruz hired Valdovinos as a peer advisor for the Mesa Engineering Program (MEP), a program that aims to support educationally disadvantaged and first-generation students in attaining four-year degrees in engineering.

"I learned how hard she works to make sure there are opportunities available for our students,” he said.

Wendy Adhearn, Dean’s Scholar and kinesiology major from the College of Applied Sciences and Arts, noted that she has learned a lot from all her professors.
“But in my second semester at SJSU, Dr. Bethany Shifflett gave me an opportunity to really challenge myself and to interact with other kinesiology students and professionals at the Western Society for Kinesiology and Wellness Conference in Reno, Nevada,” she said. “There I was able to present a critique of research that interested me and I received invaluable feedback and encouragement.”

Greg Lucio, Dean’s Scholar and a child and adolescent development major from the Connie L. Lurie College of Education, appreciates that he “has been fortunate to be enrolled in two classes with Professor John Jabagchourin.”

Lucio noted that his professor’s passion for teaching makes learning fun and easy.

“He makes lessons relatable to his students and has inspired me to use the theories and research that we discuss in an international way when working with children,” Lucio said. “It has given me a great understanding of how to work more efficiently with children.”

In addition to Karim, three other San Jose State faculty members were recognized at the Honors Convocation: Brian Belet, professor of music and an accomplished composer, as 2017 President’s Scholar; Chris Cox, lecturer in sociology and interdisciplinary social sciences, as 2017 Outstanding Lecturer; and Lui Lam, physics professor, as 2017 Distinguished Service Award winner.

Learn more about more of this year’s San Jose State scholars, as well as recent history about Honors Convocation, online.

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Peer Connections Provides Resources and Support
Junior Film student Heriberto Zavala works in Peer Connections, a support service that provides peer mentoring, peer tutoring and supplemental instruction.

By David Goll

Peer Connections, a program offering holistic academic support to students, is playing an integral role in efforts to improve the rate of student success at San Jose State University.

Deanna Peck, Peer Connections director, is hopeful about expanding and enhancing their services in coming years. Having been hired to improve and expand the program five years ago, Peck has seen the number of tutors, mentors and supplemental instruction leaders increase from 25 two years ago to 60 this spring. That could double to 120 by fall with more funding.

The services are aimed at helping students not only survive but also thrive throughout their college experience, especially in difficult classes with high-failure rates or first-year classes through which students are learning what it means to be a Spartan. University officials expect Peer Connections will provide significant support as part of the Clearing Bottlenecks initiative -- one of SJSU’s Four Pillars of Student Success adopted by the university to improve the student experience while also keeping students on track to graduate in four years for first-time freshmen or two years for transfer students. Currently, the average time is 5.2 years for first-time freshmen.
Peck said tutors generally work with students on class content, while mentors focus on assisting students with study strategies, time and stress management issues. Supplemental instructional leaders are assigned to facilitate study sessions for classes with high failure rates.

"San Jose State’s current emphasis on peer education and leadership is exemplary," Peck said. "It’s an exciting time for the program."

Tutors and mentors who work in classrooms or the spacious study area inside the Student Services Center earn more than minimum wage and average 9 to 12 hours a week on the job.

Lauren Cordova, a peer mentor, behavior science major and one of this year’s outstanding graduating senior recipients, said she works with many student athletes grappling with time and stress management issues. Michael Fashola, a chemistry major and peer tutor, said he fields many questions from students in chemistry classes about specific problems from lectures or homework. Sonnan Naeem, a peer tutor and anthropology major, said he finds satisfaction guiding fellow students as they work through some of the same problems he had earlier in his academic career.

Having already dropped a physics class at Ohlone College in Fremont, student Haider Syed said he knew when he transferred to SJSU in fall 2014 he would need help from tutors for such classes as physics and calculus. The former engineering major found Peer Connections online his first semester, but also saw presentations about it in classes.

"About a month into my first semester, I started using tutors," Syed said, adding he has continued to do so off and on. "One semester, I had help from four tutors for three courses."

Though Syed switched his major to business, he still uses tutors two hours a week.

"The tutors are there to help me," he said. "I make a note of a problem I have during a class and discuss it with them. I bring my textbooks if I have a homework problem I don't understand. I can pass these classes on my own, but I feel tutors have helped me get higher grades.

Ingrid Salazar, a junior majoring in environmental studies who transferred to SJSU last fall, brings homework to the Student Services Center an hour before an appointment with a tutor.
"It provides a nice, quiet area to study," Salazar said. "The free breakfast is nice, too."

She learned about Peer Connections from a classmate. Several weeks into the fall semester Salazar said she wasn’t faring well in pre-calculus. Vowing not to fail a class, she started working with tutor Jacky Cheng, a chemical engineering student.

"He helped me quite a bit," Salazar said. "He took things slowly and deliberately, going step by step. I needed that."

Salazar noted she felt overwhelmed at times in her class.

"I kind of felt like I was drowning," she said. "Jacky was very calm in his approach. He provided me a lifeline in that class."

She’s working with him again this semester after struggling with a chemistry class. Salazar said the help she has received from tutors will assist her in graduating on time. She hopes to join the Peace Corps.

Another student who frequently visits Peer Connections to study and improve his skills and gain confidence is Martin Tran, a junior majoring in Creative Arts. He heard about the program on a campus tour. Like Syed and Salazar, he has worked with tutors, but also mentors.

"This is a great place for me because I’m able to get help on assignments," Tran said, adding he receives assistance on study skills to prepare to take upper division courses as a disabled student.

"We reflect on assignments, we attempt to solve problems together, we communicate often via email. Tutors prepared me well when I took the writing skills test to get into upper division (courses) and meet a graduation requirement."

University officials allocated $2.8 million for clearing bottlenecks during the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years -- classes that have long wait lists that are a prerequisite to make progress toward degree as well as courses with high-failure rates.

It may already be bearing fruit. The number of units taken by both the overall student body and among new students has seen a slight uptick, according to Dr. Stacy Gleixner, SJSU’s interim associate vice president for Student and Faculty Success.
"We're focused on providing greater access to classes and improving student performance in high-failure rate classes," Gleixner said.

According to university statistics, the average unit load (AUL) for all SJSU undergrads last fall was 12.7 units, compared to 12.4 for the fall 2015 semester. Students who attempted to take a full semester load of 15 units increased significantly last fall compared to a year before: from 18 percent to 33 percent among freshman, 28 percent to 36 percent among sophomores, 28 percent to 31 percent among juniors and 29 percent to 31 percent among seniors. Among new transfer students at SJSU, it increased from 14 percent to 20 percent.

A 2015 study by the Public Policy Institute of California spurred action on this issue not only by SJSU and California State University leaders but by members of the state legislature. It predicted a shortage of a million workers with bachelor's degrees by 2025, and another deficit of 500,000 workers with at least some college course work.

High-failure rate classes exist in every college. Sometimes high failure rates in classes can be an issue of technology, while at other times, students struggle because they lack the proper background and prerequisites to succeed in a difficult course, Gleixner said. Her team is working to increase awareness of the tutoring, mentoring and supplemental instruction services offered by Peer Connections while seeking out additional funding to expand services.

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**Student Researchers Place at CSU-wide Competition in April**
From left, Jeland Palicte, Bryan Dang and Professor Colleen O'Leary-Kelley, explore virtual reality as a teaching tool for nursing simulations. The students competed at the CSU Student Research Competition in April, along with eight other Spartans.

By David Goll

On April 28 and 29, 10 Spartans represented San Jose State University at the 31st Annual California State University Student Research Competition at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Of the eight projects presented, two students received second place honors: Ryan T. Scott, who competed in the graduate-level category of biological and agricultural sciences and Mary Ryan, who competed in the graduate-level category of humanities and letters.

Scott worked on his project with his faculty mentor Peggy Plato, a kinesiology professor in the College of Applied Sciences and Arts. He studied how zoledronate, a drug given to prevent bone loss, prevents simulated weightlessness-induced bone loss while blunting the efficacy of a mechanical loading countermeasure. Ryan worked on her project with faculty mentor Daniel Silverman, an associate professor of linguistics and language, in the College of Humanities and the Arts. She compared data of Western Andalusian and Castilian Spanish speakers to explain lenition in the language, a type of sound change that alters consonants to make them sound more vowel like. The winners from all 23 CSU campuses are recognized online.
The students who competed at the CSU level first participated in SJSU’s Research Competition on March 1 and 2. They were recognized along with other students involved in a diverse cross section of research, scholarship and creative activities (RSCA) at SJSU’s 38th Annual Student Research Forum on April 5. The event showcased the wide variety of RSCA in which students are engaged. Some are searching for solutions to streamline and lower the cost of training health care workers while others are working to combine artistic and academic passions by transforming an elaborate art form from 17th-century France to come alive in modern times.

"I was ecstatic when I heard I was among the (SJSU) finalists," said Sarah Lysgaard, a graduate student in art history, at the forum on April 5. "Honestly, I couldn't believe it. Public speaking has not been one of my strong points."

Lysgaard's three-year project, titled "Ballet de la Nuit: Staging the Absolute Monarchy of Louis XIV," highlights one of the extravagant, 12-hour theatrical spectacles incorporating music, dance and poetry of centuries ago.

"I researched the meaning of these productions in the 17th century, but also how they still have an impact on our arts today, and the world in general," Lysgaard said. "They set the ground rules and structures for fashion, the arts and government still in use today."

Gilles Muller, SJSU's associate dean of research, oversees the SJSU competition. Each of the seven colleges can select up to four individual or team projects to compete. This year, entries came from five colleges: the College of Applied Sciences and Arts, Charles W. Davidson College of Engineering, the College of Humanities and the Arts, the College of Science and the College of Social Sciences.

Viewing of the research competition was open to faculty, friends and relatives of student researchers, along with the judges. Muller hopes to expand access to attend the competition more broadly next year.

"We want our student research to be a celebration of their work," said Muller, who arrived as a professor in the SJSU Department of Chemistry in 2004. "And we want a broad and diverse range of research projects."

Another student research project has great commercial potential, according to Colleen O'Leary-Kelley, SJSU professor of nursing and Clinical Simulation coordinator for the School of Nursing. She served as the faculty mentor for two December graduates, Bryan Dang and Jeland Palicte, whose project was titled, "Virtual Reality in Simulation Training: a Comparative Study for Heightening Learning Immersion to Increase University Bandwidth."
Still students at the time, Dang and Palicte plunged into the project, theorizing virtual reality cameras could provide a cheaper way to provide training for student nurses. Most schools today rely on high-fidelity patient simulation, or computerized manikins that simulate human patients. Training occurs not only for the students tending to the manikin, but for those offsite who can observe through television cameras.

"They can birth babies, wet the bed, do almost everything a human can do," Dang said. "Except jump out of bed."

However, the manikins are also expensive, ranging in price from $30,000 to $120,000 each, Dang said.

Dang and Palicte’s project revealed some improvement in training when virtual reality cameras are used at bedside instead of a TV. It allows "an unlimited number of students to be able to observe in real time, kind of like having Google Earth," he said.

Further research will be necessary to establish VR's superiority as a training tool.

See the full list of finalists online.

Spartans Meet Civil Rights Icon on Spring Break
San Jose State Spartans meet with Congressman and Civil Rights icon John Lewis during an alternative spring break trip in March.

By David Goll

When they first heard in the fall semester about a trip to the East Coast planned for spring break week in March coordinated by the African American Student Success Task Force, Chelby Gill and Adesuwa Obaizamomwan were intrigued by the academic and professional possibilities.

Now that they have completed their first trip to New York and Washington D.C., both students view it as a life-changing experience. They were among a group of 16 students who took part in an Alternative Education Spring Break trip. The students were accompanied by Dr. Michael Cheers, co-chair of the task force, associate professor of photojournalism, and photojournalism coordinator; Jahmal Williams, the interim assistant director of the Peer Connections Tutorial Program and Student Development; Felicia McKee, administrative assistant to the AVP for Strategic Communications and Public Affairs; and alumna Wanda Hendrix, '77 Sociology, '94 MPA, a member of SJSU’s Tower Foundation board of directors. Hendrix and College of Social Sciences Dean Walt Jacobs provided scholarships to cover part of the cost for students within that college to participate in the trip.

Gill and Obaizamomwan said they viewed a visit to The Studio Museum of Harlem in New York City -- one of the nation’s foremost showcases of the works
of art by people of African descent -- as one of the trip's highlights. Obaizamomwan, a senior majoring in psychology, said she also loved seeing such famed Big Apple sites as Central Park, Times Square and seeing a production of "The Lion King" at Broadway's Minskoff Theatre. Nearing graduation and because of her interest in attending graduate school to pursue politics and public policy, she was also excited to tour the American University campus in Washington.

But spending time in the nation's capital with John Lewis -- the 77-year-old Civil Rights icon who suffered a fractured skull while participating in the famed 1965 "Bloody Sunday" march in Selma, Alabama and has served as a member of the House of Representatives from Georgia's Fifth Congressional District for the past 30 years -- was a once-in-a-lifetime honor, both said.

"It honestly felt surreal to meet Rep. John Lewis," said Gill, a sophomore majoring in political science. "The feeling was much different than just meeting some celebrity. The moment had so much more meaning because this man is a Civil Rights icon. I loved hearing him talk about his experiences in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and working with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

Obaizamomwan said Lewis talked a lot about his activist past, connecting it to the students of today.

"He talked to us about activism in the past and today," she said. "He said how important it was for us to be active as leaders in student government and in social issues. And also how to stay mentally healthy while doing that. He talked about how he is still fighting today. And he said if you don't think things have gotten better, take a walk in his shoes."

Along with being a living legend, the Congressman is also very much of the current day. After all, he attended the annual Comic-Con International convention, the pop-culture entertainment and comic gathering in San Diego, two years ago to promote his Civil Rights trilogy and illustrated memoir "March: Book Two" released in 2014.

"He took selfies with us," Obaizamomwan said of the meeting with Lewis in Washington.

That longer-than-expected meeting between the SJSU students and Rep. Lewis was months in the making, Cheers said, of coordinating the meeting. After getting no response to his initial round of emails to Washington D.C., Cheers took a different tack.
"I called his office in Georgia," he said. "We were able to arrange for a visit to his Washington office, but were told it would probably only be for a few minutes."

The meeting ended up lasting far longer, even as Lewis' staff reminded him of other appointments in his busy schedule.

"He really got into it and became so engaged with the students," Cheers said. "He personally signed copies of his book for every single student."

The trip to Washington was a bit of a homecoming for Cheers, who attended graduate school at Howard University. Howard "rolled out the red carpet" for the SJSU students when they visited the historically-Black university campus during an hour-long presentation of its graduate programs. He said he hoped it would spark an interest among students to look into graduate programs at historically-Black colleges and universities, located in the East and South.

The visit also allowed students to connect with successful Spartan alumni. They met with Robert R. Rigsby, a 1983 SJSU graduate who is now an associate judge on the District of Columbia Superior Court, and Bayo Junyor, a 2012 SJSU graduate who went on to earn a master's degree from New York University, and is now a science teacher at Ascend Middle School, a charter school in Brooklyn.

Cheers said he feels it's important to get SJSU students out of their "Bay Area bubble" and into the larger world.

"I want to empower them and give them exposure to a wider world," he said. "I think that in order to close the achievement gap (for African-American students), you have to expand the opportunities."

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**Faculty and Staff Redesign Courses to Enhance Learning, Engagement**
Dr. Marilyn Easter, a professor of marketing and decision sciences, presents on her course redesign during a faculty and staff recognition luncheon hosted by eCampus on April 21.

By Melissa Anderson

During eCampus’ Faculty and Staff Recognition Luncheon on April 21, select presenters shared the way they have collaborated to enhance the curriculum in their course work in support of student success. Posters around the classroom where the luncheon was held showed some of the techniques used as part of the CSU Proven Course Redesign Grant and the university’s Quality Assurance Grant.

“We will highlight the work of staff and faculty, and hear and see what they’ve been working on,” said Jennifer Redd, director of eCampus, noting that their website lists many of the services they provide.

Dr. Marilyn Easter, a professor of marketing and decision sciences, and Prabha Chandrasekar, a mediated learning assistant, shared the ways they worked to redesign a Lucas College and Graduate School of Business introduction to marketing course with a goal of decreasing bottlenecks in the required course for students in their major. Bobbi Makani, a lecturer who also worked on the redesign, shared insights via a prerecorded video.

“To decrease bottlenecks, an online course is the solution,” Easter said. “We wanted to redesign it to make it accessible and easy to navigate.”
Using the campus learning management system Canvas, they created easy-to-digest modules each week for the students that included an overview of the content, a video introduction from Easter, step-by-step instructions, a description of learning outcomes, reading and assignments, and a “check your knowledge” section. Each week, the students also had a chance to engage live with Easter.

A student who provided a testimonial on video said that for her while working full time and taking courses toward an undergraduate degree, she sometimes struggled to get the courses she needed at times that worked for her schedule. Dr. Easter’s online course fulfilled her time needs while also providing engaging material.

Ravisha Mathur, an associate professor of child and adolescent development, and Debbie Weissman (via prerecorded video), a faculty member in the School of Information, discussed their experience as participants and more recently as team leaders with the Quality Assurance program. The program aims to evaluate the effectiveness of online courses and provides individualized mentoring to faculty to improve their online classes. Mathur, who is a peer reviewer this year, said the program helped her to improve student learning and engagement in the online environment.

The feedback she received from students showed her that they preferred some lecture information in PDFs that they could download to read at times when they were offline. She now also requires a “meet up” twice a semester for her online courses, in which students can personally engage and connect with her in person, online or by phone; she has seen an improvement in student achievement and motivation with these meet ups.

“It only has to be five to 10 minutes, but it usually ends up being 20 minutes,” she said. “Engagement goes up after that first meet up.”

Resa Kelly, a professor of chemistry and the science education program, and Yingjie Liu, an instructional designer with eCampus, discussed their work on incorporating augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) equipment into a post-baccalaureate science teaching credential program course.

“We looked at it as an exploration in a sense,” Kelly said, “To get them thinking about how they might try to teach with the technologies.”

The 2017-18 Quality Assurance application is available online, due June 18.
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