

**SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY  
ONE WASHINGTON SQUARE  
SAN JOSE, CA 95192**

**SS-F12-3, Sense of the Senate Resolution, Using a Shared Governance Model to Preserve Integrative Learning within a 120 Unit Limit**

**Legislative History:** At its meeting of October 15, 2012, the Academic Senate approved the following Sense of the Senate Resolution presented by Senator Peter for the Executive Committee.

**SENSE OF THE SENATE RESOLUTION  
Using a Shared Governance Model to Preserve Integrative Learning within a 120 Unit Limit**

Resolved, That the Academic Senate of San José State University endorses the attached white paper: "Using a Shared Governance Model to Preserve Integrative Learning within a 120 Unit Limit;" be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution and the attachments be distributed to the members of the Board of Trustees, to the CSU Central Administration, to the incoming Chancellor Dr. Timothy White, to the Statewide Academic Senate, and the local campus senates.

**Approved:** (October 8, 2012)  
**Vote:** (12-0-1)  
**Present:** (Von Til, Heiden, Qayoumi, Junn, Bibb, Nance, McClory, Lessow-Hurley, Worsnup, Ng, Du, Kimbarrow, Peter)  
**Absent:** (Bros-Seeman)  
**Financial Impact:** (None associated with the resolution; possible savings associated with reduction of programs to 120 units.)  
**Workload Impact:** (Substantial workload on a very short timeline)

**Academic Senate of San José State University  
White Paper: October 15, 2012**

**Using a Shared Governance Model to  
Preserve Integrative Learning within a 120 Unit Limit**

This paper was provoked by the publication on September 7, 2012 of an agenda item for the Board of Trustees of the California State University. This item proposed to eliminate a major segment of our curriculum—the program in upper division general education. The proposal was conceived with no faculty consultation whatsoever. Upon the intervention of numerous concerned individuals, including the Statewide Academic Senate and our own President Qayoumi, the proposal was withdrawn and replaced with an improved alternative. The events that began on September 7, 2012 demonstrate the need for a much wider understanding of shared governance and of our curriculum in integrative learning.

The Academic Senate of San José State University believes that it is important to respond to recent events in the following three ways:

1. We cite the statutory, cultural, and practical reasons for why faculty should have primary control over the curriculum of our university. We believe that the September 7<sup>th</sup> proposal utterly abrogated the tradition of shared governance, while the revised proposal takes an important first step toward cultivating a healthier climate.
2. We briefly explain the purpose and the merits of upper division general education. The initial September 7<sup>th</sup> proposal and its written rationale prove that some leaders in the CSU do not understand or value this critical component of our degrees. The withdrawal of the initial policy proposal does not correct this fundamental misunderstanding. Therefore, we explain how our own version of upper division general education—which we call SJSU Studies--helps to provide the vitally important component of *integrative learning* within our degrees.
3. We offer our conceptual endorsement of the replacement item on the Board of Trustees agenda which would require most majors to be reduced to no more than 120 units. We say “conceptual” because we are persuaded that this is the best alternative under the circumstances that preserves an appropriate division of labor between the Board and the faculty. Ideally the replacement item would itself be carefully vetted through the shared governance system. We also explain how complex and work-intensive the task of conversion will be, and we submit a plea for resources to help faculty to plan the extensive programmatic and curricular changes that will be required.

## ***The Case for Faculty Preeminence in Determining the Curriculum of the CSU***

“Collegial governance assigns primary responsibility to the faculty for the educational functions of the institution in accordance with basic policy as determined by the Board of Trustees. This includes admission and degree requirements...”<sup>1</sup>

Faculty measure the passage of time at the CSU in decades, since we tend to spend our entire career here, while many Board members and administrators come and go more frequently. We worry, therefore, that some of our less experienced administrative colleagues may not in fact be familiar with the history and the traditions of shared governance. To some of us, after all, even though Chancellor Reed has had a long and valued career with the CSU, he is nonetheless a relative newcomer! To put this in perspective, consider that we have a faculty member here at SJSU who just celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> year as an active teacher, and we have an academic senator who has served on our body almost continuously since the early 1960s. The faculty remember things that others might tend to forget.

The San José State Academic Senate has a long standing reputation of constructive engagement with administration. When administrators from outside join SJSU, they sometimes are surprised by this phenomenon, as if we alone had somehow been inoculated against a pathogen that has caused other campuses to develop an anti-administration paranoia. SJSU’s collegiality may stem from our history as the first Academic Senate in the CSU—a senate that for sixty years has incorporated the president and many key members of the administration into our ranks as full voting and deliberative senators. Presidents have different responsibilities than faculty, but Senator Caret, Senator Kassing, Senator Crowley, Senator Whitmore, and Senator Qayoumi have sought to use their wisdom to persuade us, rather than their authority to command us.

The SJSU history of collegiality gives us a sense of dismay when we witness the breakdown of collegial shared governance elsewhere in our system. We first addressed this problem in the last white paper we shared with the Board of Trustees, “Out of Crisis: Reinventing the CSU” which was distributed in 1999—a document that provoked a visit to our Senate by Executive Vice Chancellor David Spence. In that paper we hoped to draw “constructive lessons” from a growing clash between “faculty culture” and “board

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<sup>1</sup> “Report of the Board of Trustees’ Ad Hoc Committee on Governance, Collegiality, and Responsibility in the California State University,” adopted by the Board of Trustees of the California State University, September 1985.

culture.” It was our sense that the two camps were dwelling in different worlds, and too little was being done to bridge the cultural divide between the collegial and more democratic university that faculty lived in, and the more corporate and hierarchical university that Trustees sought to govern. As we said at the time:

*The conflict between corporate culture and collegial culture frequently arises in American Universities, and it need not always be unhealthy. Faculty are not so simplistic as to presume that collegial culture is "better" than corporate culture-- but merely that it is uniquely appropriate to the University. Usually, strict lines are drawn which direct Boards to deal with the matters of finance and coordination. The corporate background of Trustees makes them especially qualified to do this. On the other hand, faculty and their collegial governance are left to deal with matters of education and professional standards, which their advanced degrees and classroom experience uniquely qualify them to do. By limiting each to its proper sphere, the conflict between the two different cultures is minimized and the system receives the full benefits of both types of talent.<sup>2</sup>*

Our view from 1999 closely reflects the views of the California Legislature, which makes a similar observation in HEERA.<sup>3</sup> HEERA establishes within California law the intent of the Legislature to preserve traditional shared governance within the California State University. Specifically, it reads

*The Legislature recognizes that joint decision-making and consultation between administration and faculty or academic employees is the long-accepted manner of governing institutions of higher learning and is essential to the performance of the educational missions of these institutions, and declares that it is the purpose of this chapter to both preserve and encourage that process. Nothing contained in this chapter shall be construed to restrict, limit, or prohibit the full exercise of the functions of the faculty in any shared governance mechanisms or practices, including...the Academic Senates of the California State University, and other faculty councils, with respect to policies on academic and professional matters affecting the California State University....<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> *Out of Crisis: Reforming Governance in the CSU*. <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/ss-f99-6.htm>

<sup>3</sup> California Codes, Government Code Section 3561: Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth pointing out that this critical section of California Code was written into law with the explicit support and help of members of the ASCSU, including the Chair David H. Elliott, Professor Emeritus from San Jose State University. Professor Elliott has recounted the circumstances at a 2006 SJSU Senate retreat.

In decades past, the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees have shared this view. Perhaps the most eloquent defense of the division of labor between faculty in shared governance and the Board was framed in the document written by the Academic Senate of the CSU and adopted by Chancellor Ann Reynolds in 1983, entitled “Responsibilities of Academic Senates Within a Collective Bargaining Agreement.” This document attempts to clarify the division of labor between the union, the Board, and academic senates so that the three organizations do not wind up working at cross purposes. It repeatedly affirms HEERA’s position that it is the role of shared governance to determine “policies on academic and professional matters.” As the 1983 statement puts it:

*Through the campus academic senates/councils responsibility shall be vested in the faculty...for developing policies and making recommendations to the campus presidents on the following matters: 3. curricular policies...<sup>5</sup>*

It is against this long and rich background of respect for shared governance—especially as it relates to curriculum-- that we view with shock the events that began to unfold on September 7. How could we possibly have reached the point where a

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proposal to radically change the curriculum of the CSU was created in secrecy and placed directly on the agenda of the Board of Trustees, without even a pretense of faculty consultation? Had the September 7 proposal been approved, it would have marked a complete repudiation of shared governance within our system. As Donald Gerth points out in his well-received history, “It is not conceivable that the California State University or any comparable higher education enterprise could function with integrity and in good health without a faculty representative body in a significant and

respected governance role.”<sup>6</sup> But in a kind of surreal play--filled with miscommunication, misunderstanding, and mistrust--the September 7 proposal was

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<sup>5</sup> Responsibilities of Academic Senates Within a Collective Bargaining Context. Academic Senate California State University, 1981. Adopted by Chancellor W. Ann Reynolds, February 9, 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Donald R. Gerth, *The People’s University: A History of the California State University*, Berkeley: 2010, p. 142.

under development even while CSU officials met with the Senate leadership to seek an improved relationship.<sup>7</sup> To use Gerth's key term, our system was on the brink of losing its integrity.

We were fortunate at SJSU to be able to call upon the relationship we have with our own President to express our deep concerns with the September 7 proposal. Through his efforts and those of others the original proposal was pulled back and replaced. It must have taken great fortitude and courage to see that the new proposal would preserve a role for faculty in reshaping the curriculum under the 120 unit cap. But while we give the system credit for pulling back from the brink, we also believe that lessons need to be learned from this near-catastrophe. Concepts of shared governance, collegiality, and faculty expertise were forgotten or ignored by officials in the highest levels of system governance. We hope that the incoming leadership of the CSU will take the opportunity to set a new tone by facilitating rather than circumventing shared governance.

### ***The Case for Upper Division General Education: Integrative Learning***

The September 7 proposal to abolish upper division general education in the CSU was justified as a way to help our "high unit majors" fit within the traditional 4 year model (120 units.) While the underlying purpose of the proposal was laudable, the solution would have been devastating to the quality of our degrees. Students in our high unit majors often benefit the most from the integrative learning that SJSU's program in upper division GE supplies. We are pleased that the original proposal has been withdrawn and replaced with a more balanced approach.

The fact that experienced leaders of our system would propose the abolition of upper division general education reveals a grave weakness in that program: its importance for student learning is not well understood. Even many faculty have had limited contact with the program and may not know its intended place in student learning. Too often it has been viewed exclusively through the lens of curricular "turf" to be fought over in the battles within the FTES economy. Too rarely has it been defended on the basis of its critical role in shaping student learning. As we seek to constructively revise the curriculum under the aegis of the 120 unit model, we should do so with an accurate understanding of the goals and merits of upper division general education.

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<sup>7</sup> Diana Guerin, Chair, Academic Senate of the California State University et. al. Letter to Ephraim Smith, September 12, 2012.

Long before the term “integrative learning” became fashionable, San José State University used its upper division general education program—which we call SJSU Studies--to do just that: integrate learning. Our campus continues to embrace the goal of breaking down educational silos so that our students encounter multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving. San José State’s Strategic Plan, recently adopted under the fresh leadership of President Mohammad Qayoumi, defines one of SJSU’s key features as “Integrative Learning.” This “refers to the focus on students as intentional learners who combine knowledge from different sources as well as their own experiences and identities and continue learning throughout their lifetimes.”<sup>8</sup>

Integrative learning begins with the observation that problems in our increasingly complex world demand solutions drawn from multiple sources of knowledge—not usually from a single discipline. We have always known that our students need to acquire mastery of one of the disciplines, but it is more and more evident that discipline-based knowledge is a necessary but insufficient factor in the success of our graduates. The “real world” is far more interdisciplinary than our universities. It is easy to find committees in local corporations that have members drawn from engineering, business, science, the liberal arts, and the social sciences all sitting around the same table cooperating on a project. Each member must have mastery of his or her discipline, but the project’s success will likely depend on the ability of the members to integrate the knowledge drawn from each other’s fields, rather than simply sitting in intellectual silos. Since occupational [real world] success for our students depends upon integrating knowledge, universities must take care to see that the segregation of our curriculum by discipline does not retard the preparation of our students.

San José State has been a leader in integrative learning since 1993, when learning goals centered on “cultural pluralism” and “global understanding” were integrated into the previously more discipline-based categories of upper division general education. To understand the importance of this integration, consider whether any of the following problems can be adequately understood or solved by using only the knowledge of a single academic discipline:

- ! global climate change
- ! world hunger
- ! earthquake risks
- ! an aging society
- ! development of cultural diversity
- ! professional and business ethics
- ! religion and political controversy
- ! race and ethnic relations
- ! territorial disputes

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sjsu.edu/president/strategicplanning/definitions/>

- ! computers, ethics, and society
- ! war and peace

It is fairly obvious that each of these critical topics cries out for the integration of technical, scientific, philosophical, and social knowledge. [And as you probably have guessed] Each also represents one of our courses in SJSU studies.

Upper division general education at SJSU gives students in-depth practice with integrative learning. It creates an opportunity for them to step out of their majors, which deliver very important but mostly non-integrated knowledge, and acquire practice in a multidisciplinary environment. So, for example, when students from engineering, meteorology, nursing, political science, and philosophy find themselves taking the same class on world hunger, they share their own discipline-based perspectives and enrich each other's understanding. This "mixing" across the disciplines occurs both in the content of the course, and also in the membership in the learning community. We call this "horizontal integration" because knowledge from many parallel fields of equal importance is integrated in pursuit of a common goal. In this way SJSU Studies courses offer essential preparation for cooperative, multidisciplinary, project-based occupations and experiences.

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Some argue that integrated learning should happen strictly at the lower division level through our General Education Core. But the "Core" is a "Core" for a reason—it provides the basic foundation on which integrated knowledge can be constructed. To return to the example of our world hunger course, before students can reach the point where they can integrate knowledge from a range of disciplines they may need to have mastered college level math (to grapple with statistics,) and writing (to formulate and organize knowledge). They need to be scientifically literate (to understand studies of starvation, epidemiology, etc.), and they need an understanding of basic social science (relationship of class, poverty, war, and government.) "Integration" assumes you already have some knowledge which you *can* integrate. Students need practice at the integration of knowledge, and this can best occur at an advanced level. This feature of SJSU Studies could be termed "vertical integration" since it depends upon foundations laid down in the core.

There is an important misimpression that the CSU's program in upper division general education is "unique," and that its uniqueness proves that we are out of step with peer institutions. First, we should point out that being unique is not automatically a criticism—it is often celebrated and called "leadership." But an increasing number of institutions of higher education have imitated our model. The

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Association of American Colleges and Universities reports that 33% of its institutions have upper division general education specifically, and 63% have an integrative component in their degree programs. CUNY is in the process of strengthening advanced components in general education.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the great majority of courses offered at U.C. Berkeley to satisfy breadth requirements are upper division courses.<sup>10</sup>

Others may argue that integrated learning should take place within majors. We certainly agree and can point to some fine examples where this has been done—such as with our Business Ethics course. Further incorporation of the learning outcomes from upper division GE into majors may be possible—and this may be a fruitful direction to explore as we grapple with the 120 unit limit. However, we are also aware that multi-disciplinary approaches sometimes meet with resistance from within discipline-based departments. We are hopeful that the reevaluation of both upper division GE and our high unit majors will result in creative solutions. We need to assure that each degree preserves its important disciplinary component while also offering the students vital practice with integrative learning.

The SJSU model has sought to overcome resistance to interdisciplinary curricula by placing its control and assessment in the hands of an interdisciplinary board—and not departments. The Board of General Studies (BoGS) has sparked more than its fair share of controversy over the years, and many faculty who have served on BoGS or brought proposals before it have some bruises. Passion over what we teach and what our students learn runs high. But for all of the controversies, BoGS has not forsaken the need for SJSU Studies courses to serve the interdisciplinary learning needs of students, rather than the convenience or financial needs of departments.

In summary, and in the words of our SJSU Studies program, “students become integrated thinkers who can see connections between and among a variety of concepts and ideas. An educated person will be able to apply concepts and foundations learned in one area to other areas as part of a lifelong learning process. These courses will help students to live and work intelligently, responsibly, and cooperatively in a multicultural society and to develop abilities to address complex issues and problems using disciplined analytic skills and creative techniques.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Carol Geary Schneider, President, Association of American Colleges and Universities. Letter to colleagues in the CSU, September 12, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> <http://ls-advise.berkeley.edu/requirement/summary.html>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/docs/GE/GE\\_Guidelines\\_S09\\_revisions.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/docs/GE/GE_Guidelines_S09_revisions.pdf), p. 41.

## ***A Realistic View of Implementation: the 120 unit cap***

The September 7<sup>th</sup> proposal provoked a crisis over process and it also provoked a crisis over policy. The replacement proposal—which mandates that most degree programs be reduced to fit within 120 units—is itself controversial in some quarters. In our view this proposal does a better job of finding the appropriate division of labor between the Board of Trustees and the faculty, although any major policy change of this magnitude deserves to be thoroughly vetted with the shared governance system. It is a superior alternative because it preserves for faculty the role of determining the curriculum within limits prescribed by the Board—which we think is consistent with HEERA. Please note that this does not mean we necessarily agree with the choice to set the limit at 120—good arguments can be made for more education, not less. But shared governance does provide for the Board to set “basic policies” within which faculty senates operate, and there is no policy more basic than the length of a college education.

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While setting basic policies and limits is within the Board’s purview as the manager of the system’s resources, it is most emphatically *not* an appropriate function of the Board to determine specifically how the curriculum will be configured to fit within the 120-unit limit. There is no clearer example of what HEERA calls “an academic and professional matter” than curriculum, and the construction of degree programs is at the heart of curricular matters. Apart from the tradition of HEERA and shared governance, there are also practical reasons for why curriculum has been the province of faculty expertise. Faculty come face to face with our students, faculty do the assessment of student learning, and faculty acquire a deep understanding of what our students learn and what they need to learn. Remote actors cannot understand student needs nearly as well as those in immediate contact. Furthermore, faculty explore the frontiers of knowledge so they can be in the best position to understand how future changes will affect our students. For these reason, only faculty have the expertise to make the specific determinations of what students should learn.

Our gratitude for the replacement of the September 7 proposal with a more reasonable alternative should not obscure our concerns about implementation. The replacement proposal will be adopted no earlier than November. To implement its recommendations will require changes in our catalog copy that will be due in December. We

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want to support the difficult work that produced this compromise, and so we will do our utmost to meet the one-month timeline. We hope that the efforts we make under this intense time pressure will prove that we are approaching the goals of the compromise in good faith, and that the system will show flexibility if needed.

We are concerned, however, about the tone of the rationale for the original September 7 proposal. It revealed a fundamental misunderstanding of the historical barriers that exist to reaching 120 units. It noted that since 2008 there has been very little progress in reducing programs to 120 units, and implied foot-dragging or negligence. While there may be some lack of enthusiasm for reducing programs, we are not convinced that the authors of the September 7 proposal really understood how the pressures of our existing bureaucracy and budget help to prevent necessary reform. Since these same pressures will continue to apply as we work towards the 120 unit goal, it is important to explain them.

It is no accident that progress toward curricular reform slowed after 2008. The Board probably knows better than we do what happened in 2008—that was the beginning of our long, fiscal nightmare from which we have still not woken. Since 2008 the hiring of permanent faculty has slowed or been frozen, assigned time has decreased, and classes have been packed with higher and higher numbers of students. Over those years there have been fewer permanent faculty to carry out service activities like curricular reform, and they have been asked to teach more and larger classes. The cumulative impact of these years of budgetary contraction has been to overtax the time that permanent faculty have available for activities not directly tied to the classroom.

Planning for programmatic changes requires data, time, and hard work. Degree programs are developed to meet the needs of our graduates and to insure their ability to compete effectively for positions in their chosen career or for positions in a graduate program. Some programs are designed “from the ground up” to meet accreditation requirements. Most departments have an advisory group of individuals from outside the university to help guide the development of a program. In addition, faculty are in touch with alums, and through them, gain further understanding of what types of programmatic changes would benefit students. From these data, faculty develop assessable learning objectives for their programs. Through a periodic program planning process they evaluate how successful their programs are at meeting the learning objectives and whether new courses or programmatic changes are required. This is the “normal” pulse of curricular change, and many faculty devote hundreds of non-teaching hours to these activities to keep their degree programs current and responsive to change.

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When reforming degree programs, it is worth noting that there are two separate components to program design and each requires a major investment of time. The first is the development or revision of courses. Faculty must continually upgrade the material so as to find better and more current ways to educate their students. Secondly, all of these courses must be integrated in order to produce a successful program of study. In past years these two efforts were challenging, but they have become even more laborious in the current environment of learning outcomes assessment. No longer can courses and programs be created without thought to “a culture of evidence.” Each change must be accompanied with thorough plans to produce evidence of student learning. Whether these additional requirements are useful is a debate for another day; what is certain is that they are time consuming.

Even the laudable goals of SB 1440 have had the unintended consequences of slowing some reform efforts. This particularly applies to those degree programs currently over 120/180 units. Once a program had been reduced to 120 units, it may suddenly encounter a new set of requirements specified by SB1440 from which it was previously exempt. These additional SB 1440 restrictions “kick in” at 120 and create additional planning issues that have to be addressed as programs seek to reduce themselves.

We are pleased that the revised proposal before the board acknowledges the importance of accreditation standards. In fact, for a typical accredited program, the audience for curricular change is not primarily the Board of Trustees or even our own campuses: often the most critical reviewers are accreditation agencies. These agencies demand evidence of integrated curriculum, breadth, assessment of learning objectives and program objectives, and an evaluation of that assessment. All external accreditations are labor intensive, but what is not as commonly understood is that they leave behind ongoing monitoring and planning requirements that may not be in perfect harmony with University and CSU procedures

In short, successful curricular reforms consume enormous amounts of faculty time. Given the workload demands of reform, it is not entirely surprising that progress has slowed over the last several years. Since 2008 the budget has declined. This leaves us with fewer full-time permanent faculty who can carry out reform work. This is especially true at SJSU, which has one of the lowest percentages of tenure/tenure track faculty in the system. Our remaining permanent faculty face classrooms packed with students who need faculty attention as much as ever. Many feel as if they can barely keep their heads above water, and believe they are doing well just to fulfill their primary mission of teaching students. Under these circumstances it is simply not fair to imply that campuses have been negligent with their responsibility to make progress toward the 120 unit curriculum cap. Just as many Presidents defer maintenance of buildings during economic downturns, so too do faculty defer maintenance of curriculum.

A workable plan to implement curricular reform should reflect that resources are needed for massive programmatic restructuring.

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The solution should include a mechanism for assisting faculty to restructure their programs. Key faculty should be given release time to direct the efforts. These faculty would be responsible for helping to develop courses and integrate the contents. Advisory groups could be created to

help with compliance issues and assessment. Resources could be made available for planning sessions and retreats. Perhaps faculty could be relieved of other service duties so they could redirect their efforts toward this priority.

### **Conclusion**

The initial September 7 proposal produced frustration over the breakdown in shared governance, and anger over the dismissive attitude taken towards upper division general education. We are pleased that the system has been set on a better course, and are grateful to all those who played a role in turning events in a positive direction.

The Academic Senate of SJSU endorses the revised proposal from the Committee on Educational Policy: Baccalaureate Degree Requirements (Revised Agenda Item 3.) If the campuses are given a free hand to plot their own courses to 120 units, we will be able to develop and consider proposals for the incorporation of integrated learning into our high unit majors. It is too early to say what those proposals will be, but our guess is that creative ways of meeting the learning outcomes needed by our students will be found. Rather than sinking into a conflict-ridden process we may be able to strengthen our degree programs in ways that could help both the disciplines and integrative learning.

*... to quote a certain United States President, this "path is harder, but it leads to a better place."*

The task of revising our curriculum is daunting. But to quote a certain United States President, this "path is harder, but it leads to a better place." Rather than governance by decree, this solution enlists the faculty's expertise in creating a solution to a broadly defined policy objective.