

**SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY
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SAN JOSE, CA 95192**

SS-S15-1, Sense of the Senate Resolution, Applauding Ten Successful Years for the SJSU Campus Reading Program and Urging its Continued Support by Students, Faculty, and Administration

Legislative History: At its meeting of February 9, 2015, the Academic Senate approved the following Sense of the Senate Resolution presented by Senator Peter for the Executive Committee.

**SENSE OF THE SENATE RESOLUTION
Applauding Ten Successful Years for the SJSU Campus Reading Program and Urging its Continued Support by Students, Faculty, and Administration**

- Resolved, That the Academic Senate of SJSU emphatically endorse and celebrate the successes of one decade of the Campus Reading Program; be it further
- Resolved, That the Academic Senate of SJSU urge that faculty, students, staff and administration redouble their participation in the program; be it further
- Resolved, That the Academic Senate thank previous Director Annette Nellen and current Director Scot Guenter for their indefatigable service in founding, operating, sustaining, and enhancing this fine program; be it further
- Resolved, That the Academic Senate thank the Office of the President and the Office of Student Affairs for their continued financial support of the program.

Rationale:

In Fall 2004 the SJSU Academic Senate adopted SS-F04-2 "Activities to Build a Culture of Reading at SJSU," a resolution that encouraged and helped to establish the foundation of the Campus Reading Program. In Spring 2005, under the able leadership of Professor Annette Nellen, the program began with the adoption of Barbara Ehrenrich's Nickel and Dimed. Since that time the program has adopted, distributed, and discussed nine additional insightful texts. In recent years the program has been ably directed by Professor Scot Guenter.

The Campus Reading Program involves all the members of our campus, students and employees, reading the same book. One book is selected each year that students,

faculty and staff are encouraged to read during the summer. Texts are purchased at a discount for distribution, and often the publishers will print a special edition with an introduction by the SJSU President. Then at the start of the fall semester, readers engage in critique and analysis of the book in small discussions groups. Depending on the particular title, the books are often also adopted in courses, a practice which has enhanced curricular coherence and focus across the campus and the disciplines. Each selected text focuses on issues that have special meaning to our region and our campus community. The discussion groups are routinely assessed; for example, in 2013 participants were asked "How valuable was this experience of the discussion group to you?" and they responded positively (4.35 on a 5 point scale.) While reading and discussion are at the core of the program, over the years there have also been many events coordinated with the Reading Program that have further enriched our campus and brought it favorable publicity. On several occasions the authors have visited and spoken to the campus community about their books—further enriching the conversation and adding depth to a culture of reading. For example, the selection of the Kite Runner in 2006 brought Khaled Hosseini to campus and resulted in a special opportunity for our Theatre Arts Department to create the first production of the associated play. It also resulted in President Don Kassing asking a nearby CSU President with an understanding of Afghan culture (Mohammad Qayoumi) to come to campus to deliver a well-received lecture. More recently, Associate Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor visited SJSU in conjunction with the campus reading program having adopted her autobiography My Beloved World.

The Campus Reading Program has also promoted reading in a variety of ways that go beyond the annual book selection. For example, it has been the annual sponsor of Legacy of Poetry Day. One year, it partnered with the English Department, Poetry Center San Jose, and the Poet and Writers Coalition for a public reading of "Howl" by the Smith-Carlos statue. Several years it has participated in National Banned Books Week in October with campus activities, to draw attention to this problem that still exists today.

The SJSU Campus Reading Program has become a model program for the nation. This year, Director Guenter received an unsolicited request to present the SJSU Campus Reading Program as an example of "Best Practices" at the annual "First Year Experience" conference in Dallas in February.

Financially, we are impressed at how much the program is able to accomplish with so few resources. In AY 2013-14 the Program was supported with \$14,100 from Student Affairs. This covers a single course of assigned time for the Director, costs for guest speakers, books for faculty & staff agreeing to integrate the book into campus life in a meaningful way, and all extracurricular programming built around the book each fall to draw in varied parts of the larger campus community, as well as any special projects/activities taken on in the spring. In addition, the Office of the President ordered 4,200 books for distribution. Costs including shipping and tax totaled \$25,708.04. That comes to about \$6 each for a customized edition of a book that retails for \$12.25.

Finally, the merits of the SJSU Campus Reading Program should be considered in light of the increasing need to promote a culture of reading. Since 2004, when we adopted the last resolution on this subject, the need to encourage reading has exponentially grown. Technological change and the increasing pace of life make sustained reading even more of a challenge in 2015 than it was in 2004. Numerous studies show a general decline in sustained reading; for example, the National Endowment for the Arts finds that fewer than half of Americans have read a novel, play, or poem within the last 12 months.¹

¹ <http://arts.gov/publications/decade-arts-engagement-findings-survey-public-participation-arts-2002-2012>.

Appendix A: Authors and Books of the SJSU Campus Reading Program

Date	Author	Title	Subject
2005	Barbara Ehrenreich	<i>Nickel and Dimed</i>	Working class culture and struggle
2006	Khaled Hosseini	<i>The Kite Runner</i>	Afghan immigrant to Bay area
2007	ZZ Packer	<i>Drinking Coffee Elsewhere</i>	African American short stories, race and gender issues
2008	Sara Gruen	<i>Water for Elephants</i>	Circus novel of the Great Depression
2009	John Hamamura	<i>Color of the Sea</i>	Japanese American experience
2010	Sherman Alexie	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i>	Native American culture and disabilities
2011	Rebecca Skloot	<i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i>	HeLa cells; biotech and African American culture
2012	Conor Grennan	<i>Little Princes</i>	Child trafficking in Nepal
2013	Blaine Harden	<i>Escape from Camp 14</i>	A North Korean's cross-cultural journey
2014	Sonia Sotomayor	<i>By Beloved World</i>	Autobiographical account by Justice explores gender, poverty, and Hispanic roots.

Appendix B: Some links related to publicity regarding the SJSU Campus Reading Program

“U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor visits San Jose State”

[http://www.mercurynews.com/crime-courts/ci_26765824/u-s-supreme-court-justice-sonia-sotomayor-visits\](http://www.mercurynews.com/crime-courts/ci_26765824/u-s-supreme-court-justice-sonia-sotomayor-visits)

Author Blaine Harden signing books for a long line of students in 2013 in the old Student Union Ballroom at <http://www.sjsu.edu/reading/books/escape-from-camp-14/>

The schedule of SJSU Nepal Day, a lawn festival we put on in 2012 with Motherland Nepal, a Bay area Nepali group, can be found

here: <http://www.janapukar.com/upcoming-event-motherland-nepal--invite-you-to-a-special-event-that-will-be-held-on-wednesday-september-19--2012-at-san-jose-state-university.-16.html> Author Conor Grennan’s campus visit that year can be found

here: <http://blogs.sjsu.edu/today/2012/little-princes-author-visits-campus/>

Author John Hamamura’s 2009 visit, a collaboration with Center for Literary

Arts: http://events.sjsu.edu/EventList.aspx?fromdate=9/23/2009&todate=9/23/2009&display=Day&type=public&eventidn=297&view=EventDetails&information_id=758&print=print

Approved: February 2, 2015

Vote: 12-0-0

Present: Heiden, Terry, Brada-Williams, Qayoumi, Frazier, Miller, Sabalius, Bibb, Peter, Feinstein, Shifflett, Kimbarow

Absent: Backer

Financial Impact: None

Workload Impact: None