SJSU Strategic Conversations
03/04 Report from the Campus Forum Committee

Introduction

For well over a year, the SJSU Forum Committee under the direction of SJSU’s Accreditation Review Coordinator, Dr. Bethany Shifflett, has been actively planning and implementing a series of forums designed to seek broad-based, campus wide input related to the WASC Accreditation process and institutional planning. To date, a series of four linked forums have been completed. Each forum was widely advertised via a systematic e-mail broadcasting process, the web based university calendar, posted leaflets, and the existing dissemination systems of various offices across campus. As a result, an average of 130 students, staff members, faculty, and administrators attended each forum. At least two more forums will be held during academic year 2004-2005.

The four linked forums have been referred to as "conversations" illustrating one of the main goals of this effort - to stimulate widespread communication across campus. All four forums were similarly organized with a facilitator leading discussion on carefully selected and linked topics. Groups, with individual table facilitators, were then allowed time for discussion and formulation of conclusions. Each group yielded key points from each conversation. This information was collected and compiled, and is available for inspection on the WASC website.

Conversation #1 was held in October of 2003. The questions posed were simple and direct. What is working well? And, what needs improvement? Conversation #2 was held a month later in November of 2003. At that time, participants were asked to select five to eight critical strategic issues, define them, and explain why they are vital. The third conversation was held during February of 2004, just a few months after #1 and #2. The question posed for that day was, "What does your ideal SJSU look like?" The fourth and final conversation to date was held during March of 2004. For this forum, various groups were asked to discuss one of seven goals yielded from previous forums. Once assigned to a goal, each group addressed the following questions related to that goal: 1) When we achieve that goal, how will we know it? What are the specific success markers for that goal? 2) What specific actions do we need to take to achieve this goal? 3) Who shall be in charge of addressing the goal? 4) How will we ensure broad based input and wide dissemination of information related to the goal?

A summary of the discussions and recommendations that emerged from this last conversation is presented in the appendix of this year end report.

Outcomes from Strategic Conversations

While related to accreditation topics, these conversations sought to stimulate a broader campus-wide discussion about the strategic concerns that are most likely to affect the future of the University as it approaches its 150th anniversary in 2007.
The two forums that were held in Fall 2003 focused on clarifying the strategic landscape, in terms of those factors that are likely to be affecting San Jose State in coming years. Forum #1 asked participants to identify what was working well on campus and what needed improvement, while Forum #2 asked them to discuss the most critical issues facing the campus during the next 3-5 years. The outcome of these two strategic conversations was a consensus around 8 Strategic Issues that participants felt warranted concerted attention and improvement:

- Institutional Planning & Strategic Priorities
- Public Relations & Marketing
- Advancement, Fundraising, Alumni Outreach
- Faculty & Staff Workloads
- Enrollment Management
- Communication
- Technology
- Diversity & Campus Climate

The two forums that were held in Spring 2004 focused on exploring the strategic future of SJSU, in terms of the visionary features that should characterize the University as a whole. Forum #3 asked participants to discuss what an ideal San Jose State would look like in the next 3-5 years and identify what the University would be known for among its various publics. Forum #4 asked participants to specify success markers and suggest actions to help achieve these visionary goals. The outcome of these two strategic conversations was a consensus that an ideal SJSU should be widely known for 7 Strategic Features:

- Quality Teaching & Academic Excellence
- Graduates Who Are Well Prepared, Sought After and Successful
- A Model of How Diversity Works
- Contributor Connected to Silicon Valley
- Student-Centered Programs & Services
- Welcoming Safe Environment
- Leader in Academic Technology

Summary/recommendations

Again, the topics for all conversations were designed to be linked, and yield campus wide perspectives related to the WASC accreditation process and institutional planning. Based on most sources to date, these conversations have been extremely successful in soliciting input from all divisions on the selected topics, and providing fundamental information from which further institutional planning can be derived.

We recommend that the information in this report be reviewed and discussed among the President’s staff as an integral part of institutional planning. Considerable consensus emerged over the course of the academic year and serious consideration should be given to the actions suggested in the concluding conversation (see appendix). The energy and momentum
generated by this process needs to be taken advantage of and built upon. An excellent foundation now exists upon which a collaborative strategic planning process can be built to help guide the campus towards achieving its ideal future.

With many thanks to our Interim President Crowley and SJSUâ€™s Vice Presidents for their support and engagement in this process, we look forward to continuing conversations under the leadership of President Yu.

Appendix
Summary of Final Spring 04 Conversations

SJSU known for quality teaching and academic excellence

The campus suggested that when we achieve a reputation for quality teaching and academic excellence, the specific success markers will include characteristics and numbers of students and faculty. Among students, we would expect to see an increase in enrollment, and a higher quality of student applicants, especially when SJSU is their first choice. Similarly, highly rated professors will seek and accept positions here, and SJSU would be the choice of faculty, staff, and administrators for their children.

Other success markers for quality teaching and academic excellence include recognition from professional and academic organizations; high marks on college and university ratings; recognition from employers and local high schools, as well as international exchange programs and scholarships. The community will be involved through business and community leaders who teach courses, give lectures or workshops, and contribute financially in the form of endowed chairs, labs, and facilities.

Data to support these outcomes would be gathered by surveying students and employers for their perceptions of SJSU, employment rates of students, and satisfaction as employers.

The specific actions that SJSU needs to achieve this goal include summarizing, synthesizing, and disseminating what SJSU already does well, through appropriate and effective publicity efforts-to sell ourselves. Quality teaching can only be sustained if there is a strong reward system for teaching excellence, and support for teachers who need help. Other strategies suggested are to have service learning and mentoring opportunities in the local high schools for our students and alumni (to model the kinds of teaching and learning at SJSU), to seek out visiting professors and community leaders to teach courses or give lectures, and to retain small class sizes. SJSU should provide a welcoming and productive environment for those who come on campus, including housing assistance to faculty and professors' "chat" meetings.

The campus input was unclear about who should head the team to address this goal. Suggestions included Provost Goodman, AVP Student Outreach Marshall Rose, and VP University Advancement Robert Ashton. The team should consist of Faculty Affairs, the Center for Faculty
Development, Chairs, Deans, Advancement, Admissions, Athletics, Public Affairs, University Relations, alumni, and students. All parties agreed that this work should begin immediately.

The obvious milestones to indicate progress toward this goal are the number of student applicants and an increased acceptance rate. In addition, more national, regional, and local recognition would indicate progress in this area.

The campus suggested that ensuring broad-based input and wide dissemination of information related to this goal might depend on an open forum process like the WASC forums that have been held on campus. Information technology could be used to develop a mechanism for collecting input electronically, perhaps through email. Students could be surveyed through their classes. Each source of information would need a different procedure to gather input, depending on the individual, group, organization and the nature of the information sought.

The campus suggested that the information be communicated back to them and the larger community through the University web site; email; department websites; SJSU this week; the Spartan Daily; University, college and department newsletters; bulletin boards; and information "town meetings".

SJSU known for student services, programs, and activities that meet the needs of students

San Jose State University in downtown San Jose has a diverse student population with growing and ever changing needs. Research suggests that there are five major categories of students at metropolitan universities: commuters, students who work part-time, work full-time, are first-generation to attend college, ethnic minority, and working class (Pacheco, 1994). To create effective programming institutions must explore student attitudes on the social and academic experiences that are unique to that specific institution (Tinto, 1996). In a forum discussion faculty, staff, administration, and students shared their ideas on how SJSU can provide the services and programming that meet the unique needs of its students.

The first step in trying to reach this goal was to define what the institution needed to do to be successful in this area. Based on the discussion, there were two primary markers for success. The first would be to complete a comprehensive student satisfaction survey (pre and post) of all types of students, and second to improve communication and collaboration across all levels and departments to make information more accessible. The purpose of the survey would be determine what programs and services have value to SJSU students, and to find out what they need to succeed. By improving communication and marketing practices students, faculty, and staff would know about the services available and understand their value. Other markers for success included students spending more time on campus, stronger student interest and involvement in athletics, increased retention rate, and the completion of the Academic Success Center in the former library.

The second step in trying to reach the goal of providing the services and programs that meet the studentâ€™s needs was to identify the actions that need to be taken in order to realize the markers for success outlined above. The actions that came up most often in the forum
discussions were the organization and implementation of a needs assessment survey, and the establishment of a centralized location or source for information (on campus or virtually). The discussions included other action items such as an improved utilization of space, research on best practices at similar institutions, increased services for non-traditional students, and to improve orientation for transfer students (70% of entering students). A recognition process for faculty, staff, and students that model the collaboration and communication necessary to achieve these institutional goals was suggested as an incentive to encourage the campus to engage in these actions.

After outlining the actions needed in order to provide quality and effective student programs and services, the participants discussed the appropriate timeline and campus entities to manage the above actions. The Division of Student Affairs emerged as the primary unit for undertaking this process, and that it should begin immediately. Institutional Planning and Research was suggested as a partner in the needs assessment process, and Academic Services, MUSE, and the President’s office would play a key role as well. The concept of creating a centralized office that coordinates with both Academic and Student Affairs was also offered as a solution for managing the process. This group would ideally be run out of the President’s office to demonstrate its importance and to ensure that the group was not biased toward Academic or Student Affairs.

To ensure broad based input and dissemination of information on the institutions progress toward this goal, a user-friendly and informative website would be necessary to keep the various on and off campus constituencies up to date. A uniform e-mail system for all students to have access to would be a critical component in getting input for the process and for getting students involved and engaged with the services and programs offered. Other creative ideas for input and communication included the designation of a faculty member to act as an advisor to students, and for each program or service department to have a designated week within the academic year where they are highlighted around campus, on the website’s home page, and in the SJSU newspaper. The creation of a centralized office dedicated to helping students identify the programs and services that they need was echoed again as a vehicle for improving communication.

References

SJSU known for our contributions to the city and the region, and for our connections to the Silicon Valley

The campus commented that when SJSU is known for contributions to the city, region and for its connections to Silicon Valley, several success markers would provide an indication of achieving this goal. Faculty visibility in their field of expertise and favorable publicity coverage of SJSU would facilitate the perception by the community and businesses that SJSU is a campus with experts. Having resources to collaborate with the community and receiving external support
(from partners, alumni, agencies, businesses, etc.) were also cited as important. The perception by prospective students that SJSU offers and delivers excellent education and an exciting campus life experience were important success markers. Specific examples cited that demonstrate SJSU has achieved this goal would include extensive: student volunteerism, partnerships with community and corporations, outreach to high schools/community colleges for events/education, alumni involvement, benchmarks with other universities, etc.

The campus commented that there are important actions for SJSU to take in order to achieve this goal. In short the actions relate to developing, delivering and effectively communicating the SJSU story. Developing the SJSU story involves strategic planning, surveying the community, establishing consistent messages about SJSU, i.e., developing the promise of the SJSU brand. If the metropolitan university theme continues, a more effective definition is needed. Delivering on the promise will require involvement and integration across SJSU and the community (e.g., more involvement by SJSU community in SJSU athletics). Effectively communicating the SJSU story will involve aggressive systematic fundraising, public relations and marketing SJSU’s strengths and contributions to encourage giving something back/investing in SJSU. Marketing communications should accentuate the depth/areas of specialization, e.g., engineering, nursing, teaching, arts, etc. Communicating the SJSU story needs to be collaborative (e.g., create a partnership with Spartan Daily to communicate with students; start all SJSU classes with message about services for students). Improvements in other areas such as faculty workload and efforts to educate and lobby civic leaders and legislators on SJSU’s behalf also need to be addressed.

The campus feedback indicated that the VP of Advancement should lead the team charged with achieving this goal. However, the team needs representation from various campus constituencies including: President’s Office, Students, Academic Affairs, Academic Senate, Government Affairs, Faculty, Staff, etc.

Work towards achieving this goal should begin immediately. Several specific milestones to be used as indicators of progress towards achieving this goal were identified. The suggested milestones include: percent of faculty and staff spending time on strategic goals; student enrollment increases in specialized areas of study; increase in student applications; media tracking; funds received (business investment; alumni giving). The team needs to ensure broad-based input and wide dissemination of information related to achieving this goal.

Progress toward this goal should be reviewed and communicated in a variety of ways. A process is needed to review progress to the overall strategic plan and make adjustments as needed. Communications within the team and to a broad audience is needed. Written (website, email, etc.) and face-to-face communications (team meetings, forums, etc.) are essential.

SJSU known for having an appreciation for diversity and being a model for how diversity works.

The campus suggested that when we achieve the goal of being a model for how diversity works, there will be both internal and external markers. Internally we could expect to see on a regular
basis events and forums that both promote diversity on campus and nurture a welcoming environment for our faculty staff, students, and administrators; faculty mentoring diverse undergraduate and graduate students; social groups that are mixed; evidence in the curriculum that students have the opportunity to explore and understand issues related to diversity in its broadest definition; evidence via surveys of faculty, staff, students, administrators and alum that perceptions of SJSU in the area of diversity are positive. Externally, we could expect to see SJSU highlighted in the media, professional journal publications, and an array of community and government sources as a model for its successful endeavors in the area of diversity.

Actions suggested were quite often related to communication and training. Specific suggestions included employee training related to diversity issues in the classroom; soliciting information via surveys, web site, entrance and exit interviews, public; police reports. The emphasis was on being proactive.

Participants recommend that the lead person in charge of overseeing working toward the goal should be from The President's office (not the campus climate committee). The team addressing this goal should have representatives from all divisions and also from students from each college. It is also recommended that Associated Students, Campus Climate, Institutional Research, President, Alumni, Advancement, Office of Equity and Diversity (HR), Ombudsman, Counseling, University Communications, Academic Technology, Study Abroad Program (International Program), be involved. It has been noted that The Campus Climate position title should more aptly reflect diversity as a major part of its mission (e.g. "Campus Diversity Officer"). All parties agreed that this work should begin ASAP.

The campus suggested that the milestones to indicate progress toward this goal include responses to surveys about diversity, annual assessment of diversity as reported by the task force (composed of people from the above named offices), results posted on a diversity watch website which should have an obvious link from the homepage, and reports in Washington Square, SJSU This Week, etc.

The campus suggested that the input and dissemination be communicated back to them and the larger community through the University Web site; ongoing surveys, campus diversity celebration day, Presidential address/messages, ongoing campus conversations, SJSU This Week and Washington Square articles, and Spartan Daily articles.

**SJSU known for having graduates who are well prepared, sought-after, and successful**

The campus suggested that this goal would be achieved when students can demonstrate success as measured by the academic standards established by departments and programs, when graduates are employed in positions related to their degree field, and when graduates can successfully compete with graduates from other institutions. We would also expect that a broad range of respected employers would choose to come to SJSU and recruit our graduates. In addition to job and career employment, graduates would also be involved in the community, volunteering to serve on advisory boards, civic organizations, and even holding elected office.
Finally, having successful graduates should produce alumni who maintain close contact with SJSU, and are active in directing external resources to the university.

The specific actions needed to achieve this goal include enhanced data collection, attention to issues of teaching and learning, and effective public relations. First, there is a need to collect assessment data related to academic success in departments and programs. Other data should be obtained from employers through the Career Center about the preparedness of our graduates, and from alumni about their experiences at SJSU. Second, actions related to teaching and learning include smaller classes (to foster more student-centered learning and faculty-student contact), and more applied, "real world" learning opportunities (i.e. service learning, internships, and guest speakers from business and industry). A related suggestion is to have higher standards and more rigorous evaluation of students, particularly in terms of the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in the workplace. The third category of actions, effective public relations, is focused on the need to better communicate the "SJSU story" to the broader community. One suggestion was to enlist recent graduates in sharing their experiences with the university.

There was agreement that the president should be the lead person in charge of ensuring that SJSU is known for having successful graduates. Having the president as the driver will demonstrate how serious the university is about achieving the goal. Other suggestions about who should be involved include Career Planning & Placement, Alumni Association, Advancement, Public Relations, Institutional Planning & Academic Resources, Academic Senate, the Provost, students, and faculty. There was broad agreement that this work should begin immediately.

The campus suggested that before developing a communication plan it is necessary to assess current modes of information dissemination. This assessment, including strengths and weaknesses of what is currently happening, should form the basis of a new plan. The university should also take advantage of advances in technology to enhance communication and access to information. To that end, the campus suggested making "fact sheets" about SJSU available to the campus community through the library web site. This will enable faculty, students, and staff to act as ambassadors for the university. Other specific suggestions include the development of databases, leadership forums, luncheons, relations with news media, newsletters, listserves, fund-raising dinners, and community presentations.

**SJSU know for having a welcoming, friendly, and safe environment**

The SJSU campus community will know when we achieve the goal of having a welcoming, friendly, and safe environment when students, faculty, and staff are confident to move freely about the campus, and when there is efficient communication to students about admissions and registrations.

The specific success markers would be evident by survey assessments and student retention rates. Success markers that measure the reputation of SJSU should be identified. Questionnaires should place emphasis on effective communication and transactions with employees across all levels of the university, e.g., what perceptions do people have in mind about the campus? What have they "heard" about reputation of our school from people?
Actions that need to be taken to achieve the goal are to conduct surveys. A way of obtaining information from students is to attach survey questionnaires to graduation applications. Also, 100W course sections can be utilized to catch many students. In addition, it is recommended that data which are already available be used. Another ideas for meeting the goal is to provide training to constituent groups to make them aware of their role in conveying that SJSU is a welcoming, friendly, and safe environment, e.g., identification of expectations for customer support, and reinforce and remind each other role responsibilities; maintain data on survey results, encourage students to discuss and speak out about their problems; ask student their own ideas for bettering the system (solicit their participation in decision-making); include community in data collection; conduct specialized surveys for specific issues such as parking; data collection during orientation; ask specifically about the negative experiences with any area of campus; and allow students and other community groups to regularly evaluate SJSU. It was also noted that surveys used should maintain awareness of cultural differences in soliciting student feedback.

The following areas or units were identified as being able to take charge of the process: Institutional Research (input from faculty, students, and staff); Human Resources (Every constituent group on campus); Public Relations. The lead person(s) to be in charge of overseeing the work toward this goal should be one or a combination of the following: Assistant to the President for campus climate; Muse Coordinator; Academic Services Director; Student Life and Leadership Director; UPD Chief, Institutional Research Director; and any of the three Vice-Presidents.

The work should begin immediately. Milestones that can be used as successful indicators of programs are an increase in percentages of satisfaction based on the results of recent surveys. Broad-based input and information dissemination can be assured by: assuring ease of use and locating information; priority and web site access; offering something to participants; include off-campus resources for access; reach out to people and inform of ways to get info and surveys. It is suggested that information about progress toward this goal be communicated to the campus and larger communities by utilizing web and periodicals, using care to not bombard with info; and utilize alternative media sources to reach off campus communities.

**SJSU known as a Leader in technology**

The SJSU campus community will know when we achieve the goal of being a Leader in Technology when the campus is comprised of Smart Classrooms, when we are a wireless campus-wide, when we achieve breadth and depth in on-line classes, when the application through graduation process is 100% paperless and when our web site demonstrates state-of-the-art technologies that include virtual tours and fairs.

The campus identified four specific actions that are critical to achieve the goal as a Leader in Technology. First, the campus needs to centralize the support system for current and new technology. Second, the campus must create strong external partnerships for resources. Third, an Academic Technology Task Force needs to determine the needs, applicable technology available to meet those needs and a cost/benefit analysis of implementing the technology. Last, the campus must commit resources to implement Task Force Outcomes.
The following areas and units were identified by the campus for representation on the team to address the goal of SJSU being known as a Leader in Technology. Members from each of the eight colleges with representatives from faculty, staff, technical and administration were suggested. In addition, the campus suggested a representative from the CMS project team, a student representative and a community representative. The group discussing this topic suggested that the best person to lead the charge of overseeing the team was the Vice President of Academic Technology.

San Jose State describes itself as Silicon Valley’s Metropolitan University. With this in mind, the group believes that the work toward achieving the goal of SJSU being known as a Leader in Technology should begin immediately. Milestones that were determined to be useful as indicators of progress toward achieving this work included having 25% of the campus be set-up with wireless nodes within one year, having 75% of the campus set-up with wireless nodes by 2007, having 25% of the classrooms on campus be “Smart” classrooms within one year, having 50% of all classrooms be “Smart” classrooms by 2007. In addition, the campus identified having a fully functional and fully integrated degree audit program and prerequisite audit system in place by Fall 2005. To meet these milestones and communicate the progress toward the goal, the campus suggested that an inventory of current Academic Technology Systems be taken within all units and provided to the Task Force. The Task Force would also request input as to the functionality of this technology as well as input on current technology deficiencies. The same representatives providing input would disseminate the findings of the Task Force back to the units. In addition, an annual report to the campus/community that demonstrates progress toward the goal and resource needs would be necessary as a communication and marketing tool.

SJSU Campus Forum Committee

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