OPEN LETTER TO THE STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF AND FRIENDS OF SAN JÓSE STATE UNIVERSITY

May 8, 2014

From Chancellor Timothy White:

As your Chancellor I first visited with San José State University students, faculty, staff, leadership, along with community and foundation members in September 2013. Following your invitation in November 2013, I engaged with several faculty, staff, students and senior administrators in reviewing concerns about campus governance. I have visited campus on several occasions, and was aided by the capable work of a three-person study team, who recently reported their observations to me.

The voices of campus members have been clearly heard and I thank them for raising them. I also thank the study team for the long hours and hard work they invested in this effort to understand the issues at SJSU, and help inform a path forward.

For the campus to address these issues it will require authentic consultation among campus, faculty, student and staff leaders, consultations that will lead to informed and strategic decisions. I am encouraged that President Qayoumi has set a course to do so, and I am confident in San José State University’s ability to succeed.

From President Mohammad Qayoumi:

When I was selected to become president of San José State University, I was extremely excited about the possibilities. The potential for engaging SJSU with Silicon Valley and what that could mean for our students and academic programs is what drew my initial interest. Upon arrival on campus, I engaged in a process that created Vision 2017 and advanced a number of initiatives I believed consistent with that vision.

It became evident over time that faculty, staff, and students became frustrated and angered by many of the fast-paced actions taken by me and members of my administration. In response, the Senate took action in November 2013 and formed a resolution requesting that the Chancellor review the state of shared governance on our campus. I wholly supported the resolution. The Senate Executive Committee and I want to share with the campus the outcome of this review.

After speaking with the Chancellor and hearing what the members of the study team learned during their visit, I reflected on how my actions affected SJSU faculty, students, and staff. In attempting to move quickly toward our goals, I stepped on long-standing SJSU consultation practices and, as a result, harmed our practice of collegial shared governance. For this, I am regretful.
San José State University  
May 8, 2014  
Page 2  

Shared governance has long been a hallmark of SJSU. Going forward, I want to assure you that I will honor the consultative process. I am committed to moving slowly where necessary and taking steps to allow for broad and inclusive consultation with all the stakeholders at this university. To that end, and in keeping with the Chancellor’s suggestions, the Senate Executive Committee, the Cabinet, and I have initiated a plan to jointly address each area of concern identified in the review process.

I am fully committed to making the changes necessary. The improvements will take time and I ask for your support and your collective commitment to “right the ship” and return SJSU to its rightful place as the great institution of learning we all believe it is and must always be.

From the President's Cabinet and Senate Executive Committee:

Nicholas Ayala  
President, Associated Students

Shawn Bibb  
Vice President, Administration and Finance

Rebecca Dukes  
Vice President, University Advancement

Andy Feinstein  
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

Stefan Frazier  
Chair, Instruction & Student Affairs; Assoc. Professor, Language Development and Linguistics

Stacy Gleixner  
Chair, Curriculum & Research; Professor, Engineering

Lynda Heiden  
Chair, Academic Senate; Professor, Psychology

Michael Kimbarow  
Vice Chair, Academic Senate; Chair and Professor, Communicative Disorders

Michael Kaufman  
Chair, Organization and Government; Chair and Professor, Physics

Judith Lessow-Hurley  
Statewide Senator; Professor, Elementary Education

Bill Nance  
Vice President, Student Affairs

Wendy Ng  
Chair, Committee on Committees; Chair and Professor Sociology & Interdisciplinary Social Sciences

Kenneth Peter  
Chair, Professional Standards; Professor, Political Science

Mohammad Qayoumi  
President, San José State University

Beth Von Till  
Past-Chair, Academic Senate; Lecturer, Communication Studies

Working together we have identified several core needs and action plans:

1. Identified Need: Members of the campus community need to have their voices heard more frequently and more respectfully. Multiple instances were highlighted in the review process in which sectors of the campus community felt they were not consulted on matters critical to them. Action Plan: Over the course of the summer, the Senate Executive Committee and Cabinet will develop a plan by which meaningful consultation occurs with appropriate campus stakeholders. For example, frequent areas of concern will be identified that are likely to impact our campus, such as enrollment targets, class size, curriculum, auxiliary mergers, student fees, and budgeting. A consultation matrix will be established that identifies the primary decision-maker, constituent groups to be included in consultation, what form consultation may take, and how the decision and its rationale will be disseminated. It is recognized that this must be more than an organizational exercise; it cannot be accomplished without a full commitment to change and a system of accountability and evaluation.

2. Identified Need: A mutual understanding of shared governance. Action Plan: A retreat of the Senate Executive Committee, Deans, and Cabinet will be held in June 2014. A position paper will be developed describing our joint understanding of shared governance at SJSU. The discussion will include the current structure of the Senate and the Cabinet.
3. Identified Need: To reaffirm the primary role of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Response: Dr. Andy Feinstein was appointed recently after a national search, and with the broad support of the faculty and academic leadership. In his role as Provost and VP of Academic Affairs, he will serve on the President’s Cabinet as the first among equals, and work directly with academic leadership and the Senate on matters of budget, enrollment, and other academic and operational matters.

4. Identified Need: Improving leadership effectiveness of the Cabinet and engendering greater trust. Action Plan: To improve timely and respectful communications and relationships between and among cabinet members and campus stakeholders, all members of the Cabinet will appraise their role and practices in providing leadership not only for their areas of direct responsibility, but for the campus writ large in the context of CSU.

5. Identified Need: Broad concerns were expressed regarding budget decision processes and transparency. Action Plan: Establish a budget advisory committee. The committee will schedule advisory meetings and focus on transparency and clear communication of the budget and expenditures to the campus.

6. Identified Need: The University needs a clear policy on use of facilities for program and program-related activities/events. Action Plan: Facility policies specific to program or program-related activities and events will be developed or modified to establish priorities, availability of space, and costs. A plan will be developed to improve communication of policies and better document procedures. The charge of existing space/facilities committees or other relevant bodies will be considered to ensure consultation regarding design and use of space.

Closing thoughts from Chancellor Timothy White:

As CSU’s oldest campus, San José State University enjoys a proud and rich tradition of academic excellence, and an unprecedented opportunity going forward to serve the greater San Jose region with higher education, research, and community engagement that fuels tomorrow’s California economy and society.

I opine that SJSU will journey forward successfully by working together and sharing responsibility to succeed with the action plans you have identified above. I encourage the plan for SJSU to have metrics, timelines, and foci of responsibility and accountability. It will serve as a guide to campus activities in these dimensions, and will help inform my periodic review of SJSU, which in turn informs the CSU Board of Trustees.

I look forward to celebrating with you the successes of San José State University in the months and years ahead.