

2020 Fall Welcome Address
President Mary A. Papazian
August 6, 2020

Introduction and SJSU Adapt

Hello, and thank you for joining me. I want to welcome all of you to the Fall 2020 semester.

When I first addressed the Coronavirus pandemic several months ago, I wrote that the situation was unlike anything I, or any of us, had ever experienced.

Well, here we are, heading into the fall, and in many ways we remain in the same boat. If anything, the challenges we face have only multiplied these past several months:

- We have seen the protests and calls for action with regards to systemic racism that were sparked by the deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and others leading to broader discussions around racial inequities.
- There was the decision by the Supreme Court regarding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, and the stresses that were felt by so many of us within the San José State community even after what can be described as a positive, if only temporary, outcome.
- We dealt with a proposed federal policy that would have stripped visas from international students whose courses move exclusively online amid the coronavirus pandemic.
- We are dealing with severe economic hardships due to the global pandemic, hardships that are particularly acute for many of our students and their families.
- And, of course, we have the pandemic itself, and the public health crisis that impacts all of us.

We as a community here at San José State have been facing tremendous challenges these past several months. One that looms large for us at the time of this recording, August 6th, is our financial and budget situation.

As you know, the state's 2020-21 budget includes \$299 million in cuts to the CSU system, and that means that campuses like ours will see a significant reduction in their budget allocation.

Chancellor White has outlined a course of action to address and mitigate these budget shortfalls, including a difficult decision to authorize each campus to proceed with some layoffs and a spending down of discretionary reserves.

I am acutely aware of the difficulties and hardships that so many in our community have experienced during this pandemic, and I will continue to advocate for you as best I can in the coming months. We will do our best to protect our employees' job stability. In these difficult economic times, we will lead with our values and make decisions based on the strategic priorities developed by the hundreds of faculty, staff, and students who contributed to the development of *Transformation 2030*. I expect to share more detailed information about the university's 2020-2021 budget in the coming weeks.

Even though the road ahead will remain bumpy, there is reason for optimism, even in the midst of the multiple crises and the stressful events that we continue to experience. I am delighted to be able to share some of those things with you as we look ahead to Fall Semester and the rest of the academic year.

Much of what we can expect for the upcoming Fall semester can be found on our **SJSU Adapt** website, which lays out our four-phase approach for the continuation of campus operations. You also will find links to the recent Town Hall Zoom events that we conducted on this topic.

So I will not repeat all of the details here, but I would encourage you to check the SJSU Adapt website whenever you have any questions about what the Fall semester might look like. We will continue to offer updates and more details as the County and State guidance changes and informs the protocols for how the campus operates.

Incoming class

To begin, I want to share some very good news that might come as a surprise to some of you.

For the Fall semester, we are anticipating approximately 3,400 new freshmen, 4,300 new transfers and 2,500 new graduate students. We project that our regular session enrollment will land at around 33,000 students with another 2,700 special session students.

Think about those numbers for a moment. Though they are down slightly from our enrollment figures from recent years, I believe they demonstrate **beyond a shadow of a doubt** that students want to come to San José State to further their education, despite the unprecedented situation in which they and their families find themselves. This is a tribute to the reputation of San José State and the realization that students and families have that a Spartan education is one worth pursuing, even in—perhaps especially in—challenging times.

I am very proud of the campus-wide effort that took place to bring in this incoming class, particularly our Enrollment Management group and the entire Division of Student Affairs, in strong partnership with the Division of Academic Affairs. We all know by now about the overwhelming success we had in moving our Admitted Spartan Day to an online environment, and the direct outreach and webinars we conducted for our admitted students and their families made all the difference in the world. **What an exceptional team effort this was!**

There are other details I can share about our fall class and what those students can expect.

The average grade point average of our incoming first year class is 3.45, so we will clearly have a group of high achievers representing our diverse community joining us!

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly given the current environment, a higher percentage than usual of our incoming undergraduate students are coming from right here in Santa Clara County.

And our hard-working financial aid office has awarded aid to **nearly 20,000 students** for Fall 2020. This, of course, is absolutely critical given the current climate, so **hats off to everyone in our Financial Aid and Scholarship Office** for the incredibly important work they do to make college affordable and help alleviate the heavy financial burden felt by so many students and their families.

As far as what's on the horizon this fall, more than 120 courses—for both first-year students as well as continuing students—will have peer educators supporting our enrolled students with tutoring, mentoring and guidance this fall through our **Peer Connections** program. And we have introduced “chatbots” in both Admissions and Financial Aid as a way of communicating and answering the most common questions.

For our **Weeks of Welcome** this year, our **Student Involvement** team is conducting what they call a “Virtual Tabling,” which you might think of as a reimaging of the WOW Kick-Off Festival that we typically have held on the 7th Street Plaza on the first day of classes.

We hope and expect to see wide representation from across our campus, with features including pre-recorded videos to welcome students to different areas and services; shared print and digital resources like brochures and flyers; and perhaps even live-stream events like Q&As or webinars.

Because our **Sammy App** is such a popular and highly-used social platform for our students, our Virtual Tabling will be hosted there, as well as on the Student Involvement YouTube channel. The program will be posted from Wednesday, August 19, through Wednesday, September 30, so there should be plenty of time for our students to check it all out and learn about all the great offerings that are in store for them on campus!

Faculty and staff

Now, on to our faculty, that amazing group of educators and academic leaders who are the bread and butter of our mission at San José State. Let me be very clear about this: the San José State faculty is **exceptional**, yet somehow it seems to get better and better every year.

I can tell you that it has been a very busy time for all of our faculty members this summer. **More than 1,000** of them took part in a summer workshop focused on inclusive, accessible and well-designed online and hybrid instruction. This thoughtful, well-planned approach will go a long way toward making our teaching environment as robust as possible this semester, regardless of its mostly-virtual nature.

This year's faculty recruitment landed us **67** newly-hired, tenured-line faculty members.

Four of our departments lead the way with **three** new tenure line faculty members each, and those are **Marketing and Business Analytics; Biological Sciences; Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences;** and **African-American Studies**. **Sixteen** other departments have **two** new tenure or tenure-track faculty members joining their ranks this fall.

Four of our new faculty members are from our Wildfire Science Cluster Hire. Many of you may be aware of the tremendous success we have seen in our **Fire Weather Research Laboratory**. Once we began to recognize the very special level of expertise that we possess in this vitally important area, we began to prioritize this research discipline and embark on a dedicated effort to hire even more great scholars with backgrounds in fire studies.

So, this interdisciplinary effort has begun with these four new hires! The effort will have a **strong research** focus, and it will connect **multiple colleges** since collaboration is a critical part of the overall strategy. We plan on being a national leader in the cluster hire space and a model for how it can work effectively. Congratulations to everyone working to make this initiative a success—and welcome to our new wildfire scientists!

We are just as delighted to have two renowned scholars joining San José State this fall as new department chairs. They are the **criminologist Paul Knepper**, who now chairs our Justice Studies department; and the **researcher and author Travis Boyce**, chair of the African-American Studies department. Welcome, Paul and Travis!

Many of you likely have heard about the new ethnic studies and social justice requirement for students at all of the CSU campuses, passed by the CSU Board of Trustees at its July meeting.

Although the requirement does not go into effect until 2023, **SJSU will be ready to implement it**. In fact, as a component of our response to the **2016 CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies** report, we hired new faculty members these past few years—*including four who will start this fall*—in each of our four ethnic studies areas: African-American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicana and Chicano Studies, and Native American Studies. The College of Social Sciences also created the **Ethnic Studies Collaborative** to enhance interdisciplinary work, such as creating a minor in Comparative U.S. Race and Relations. So, when this new ethnic studies and social justice requirement launches, we will be fully prepared to spring into action.

Finally, I also would like to welcome a few other important additions to the SJSU academic and leadership community.

On the first of July, **Theresa Davis** joined us as vice president for University Advancement. This is such a key period for San José State, and Theresa's strong background in fundraising, campaign management, major gifts, corporate and foundation relations, alumni relations, and annual giving are going to be pivotal for us as we move forward. So, welcome, Theresa.

Also on July 1, we welcomed **Audrey Shillington** as the new dean of our **College of Health and Human Sciences**! Audrey's training, research, and leadership background is striking for its

interdisciplinary and collaborative nature. I know she will do an exceptional job building the College and ensuring that we are at the forefront of understanding and addressing the health disparities that exist within our communities' most marginalized populations. Welcome, Audrey.

Traci Ferdolage is our new senior associate vice president for facilities development and operations. Traci most recently served as associate vice chancellor of physical planning, development and operations at UC-Santa Cruz, and she brings with her an impressive background in real estate, physical and environmental planning, design and construction, engineering, and many other skills. It's great to have you with us, Traci.

Finally, I am happy to welcome **Magdalena (Maggie) Barrera** as our Interim Vice Provost for Faculty Success. She began this important position on August 1st and previously she served as professor and chair of Chicana and Chicano Studies. Maggie has led programming to help our students bolster their academic resilience, while helping our junior faculty navigate pathways to tenure. Her extensive work on campus with diversity issues and her collaborative efforts with the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion positions her exceedingly well to do great work for us in the Office of the Provost.

I am so very proud of the work being done here by university faculty and staff members. This university simply does not function without your efforts and dedication, and that is even more true during trying times such as these. So thank you.

Research

Now, I would like to shift my attention to research, graduate, and doctoral studies.

Firstly, our **Division of Research and Innovation** has been making great strides as it establishes new functions while expanding others. I expect this to continue into the fall and the remainder of the academic year, despite the many external challenges we face.

Research Development is a new function in the Office of Research that was established last year to help us achieve growth in the funding stream for university researchers from extramural RSCA grants. This important new team will play a key role in working with our faculty across all disciplines and colleges as they develop their research proposals.

Additionally, the Division of Research and Innovation has launched three new support initiatives to help faculty grow their grant opportunities, so it will be very exciting as we soon began to reap the rewards from these activities and help our researchers and principal investigators take their **Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity** to the next level.

This also is shaping up to be an important year for the Division of Research and Innovation as it establishes the **Office of Innovation**. This group will lead the development of the technology transfer infrastructure and services as well as central innovation and entrepreneurship support programs for all of our students and faculty. I know Vice President for Research and Innovation, Mohamed Abousalem, and his team will do a great job with this.

Graduate Studies

Believe it or not, in just a few months our new **College of Graduate Studies** will **celebrate two years** since its inception, and you can imagine how busy Dean Marc d'Alarcao and his team have been.

As the **first graduate college** in the California State University system, the new college has been developing ways to elevate the educational experience for our more than 8,000 graduate students. Just let me repeat that: we have **more than 8 thousand graduate students** here at San José State, which is just under 25% of our total student enrollment!

One of the many things Marc and his team have been doing is working to expand the array of graduate offerings available at SJSU.

This fall, we are welcoming our first class of **audiology doctoral students** and also are developing an **occupational therapy** doctorate. At the same time, we are exploring several possible Ph.D. programs to be offered in collaboration with University of California campuses.

Finally, we have **five new master's degree programs** under development, including three in the area of **data science and analytics**, a burgeoning field for which Silicon Valley employers rely on San José State to educate the next generation of doers and leaders.

Other new academic programs

We are excited to be launching two new master's programs this fall that we believe will address current and future workforce needs: A **Master of Science in Data Science** program noted earlier, and a **Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence**. These add to the data science and computer degree programs in which more than 3,700 of our students already are enrolled.

Whether it is through these new programs, our existing Master's programs in **Data Analytics, Informatics, and Bioinformatics**, or our undergraduate programs in **Computer Science, Software Engineering** and other fields, or a variety of certificate programs at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, we fully expect in the coming years to provide even more talent to the Silicon Valley workforce than we already do.

We also have elevated and updated some of our existing academic programs to better align with student needs. These include the **Master of Arts in Educational Leadership** with a concentration in **Emancipatory School Leadership** that just launched this summer, and a **Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling** that will begin in fall 2021. Elevated to a new degree is our **Master of Arts in Counseling and Guidance**, which previously was a concentration in the Master of Education degree program.

At the undergraduate level, we now are offering new concentrations in **Forensic Science (Digital Evidence Concentration), Public Health (Community Health Education Concentration), and Public Health (Population Data Science Concentration)**.

This is all very exciting stuff. These advances and updates are yet another indicator of the high quality and very relevant educational offerings that we are providing to our students.

International Programs

Perhaps one of the areas hardest hit by the global pandemic has been our **International Programs**.

The health and travel restrictions caused by COVID-19 in the United States and around the world caused the cancellation of many study abroad and university exchange programs. San José State's Study Abroad and Away program, for example, had to cancel 144 programs to 33 countries, affecting 427 of our students. So this has been very difficult for our international students, their families, and those who serve them here at SJSU, as well as for our California students seeking a global experience.

Still, even with the travel restrictions, SJSU remains committed to creating innovative global experiences for our students, faculty, and staff. New program models will continue providing multiple global learning opportunities for students during this challenging environment. We have virtually met with over 20 exchange partner universities to discuss programming among faculty members and virtual exchange opportunities for students. Eight partner universities have connected to SJSU faculty members to collaborate virtually this fall and spring, helping internationalize their classrooms and the campus as a whole.

We also will be launching **Virtual International Partners**, a pilot program with the College of Health and Human Sciences during the Fall 2020 semester that connects SJSU students with students from our partner universities. And when travel once again becomes unrestricted, SJSU's Study Away and Abroad office will be ready to connect students to opportunities around the world.

A final note on our international programs. We are all grateful for a tremendous gift of more than one million dollars that alums Michael and Kathryn Grischy offered to the university just recently, a gift that specifically supports students who study abroad for a semester. This comes, of course, at a critical time, so we are delighted by the generosity of the Grischy family and cannot thank them enough.

Technology

In the technology arena, we continue to migrate the majority of our manual—or, paper—processes online. We already have done this with 65 percent of our processes, so we are slowly but surely marching toward our goal of 100 percent, or at least as close to that as we can get.

This transition to online and automated processes helps us to cultivate efficiencies and, essentially, enhances the overall user experience. It is the kind of behind-the-scenes effort that often goes unnoticed, but is transformational in the long-term. It also has been critical to our success in maintaining services as our staff has been required to work from home during this pandemic.

Perhaps the most visible area of work from our IT team and one we will continue to see throughout the fall and beyond is the deployment of technology solutions that enable the hybrid method of instruction that we will see this semester—and perhaps beyond.

This work is incredibly important in our new environment, so I am very happy that we have such a talented team of technology professionals on hand as we continue building methods and solutions that allow for a flexible learning environment and successful engagement activities.

So, thank you to our Information Technology team for the great work they are doing in all of these important areas.

Athletics

We speak a lot about how we engage with the City and the broader community, and there are **two significant ways** in which we routinely do that.

I think of these as our campus's **two major bookends, both of which** excite our alumni base, get people talking about San José State, and show off the variety of talent we possess here at this university. And both of these areas are FUN!

I am referring, of course, to both our **Athletics programs**, and our **artistic and creative** endeavors.

We do not know just yet when our student-athletes will be able to resume on-field practice or competition. There are just so many factors and so many unknowns.

When we eventually *can* watch our football team and our other fall sports such as men's and women's soccer, you will be able to park in the new multi-story parking structure located at 10th & Alma and see the progress on the transformation of the east side of CEFCU Stadium. There, you will see how we are preparing for the construction of the Spartan Athletics Center, the future home of football, women's soccer, and men's soccer.

Besides the construction at the football stadium, we recently received a significant matching gift from **Connie and Bob Lurie** for an on-campus baseball field which, when completed, will be located at 10th and Humboldt Streets.

Later in the spring, San José State and the City of San José will be a center of attention for college sports this year. Our men's golf team again will be the host of the nationally-televised 74th Western Intercollegiate tournament on The GOLF CHANNEL. Our men's golf coach **John Kennaday**, I should add, forged the multi-year national TV contract with the GOLF Channel and is in his first year of a two-year term as the president of the Golf Coaches Association of America.

I also want to congratulate assistant football coach **Alonzo Carter**, who was named by 247 Sports the 2019 “Football Recruiter of the Year” for the Mountain West. More importantly, “Zo,” as he affectionately is called, has been recognized for his leadership in calling for action to address systemic racism in the sports world. Beginning in May, Zo’s West Coast Zoom Clinics attracted between 200 and 700 coaches from all levels per Zoom call to listen, learn, share and network as coaches dealt with the effects of COVID-19 and systemic racism reignited by the Black Lives Matter movement.

Zo is an incredible leader on and off the field, and precisely the kind of individual we want working with our student-athletes. Thank you so much for your efforts, Zo, and the work you continue to do for our Spartan student-athletes.

Speaking of our student-athletes, **Natasha Harris** and **Darrian Reed** from women’s soccer and men’s basketball player **Caleb Simmons** created a program called Athletes4CHNGES. They collaborated with students around the country to raise close to \$80,000 in one week and plan on donating the proceeds to supporting Black Lives Matter initiatives.

And, lastly, athletics director **Marie Tuite** and vice president for strategy and chief of staff **Lisa Millora** will be two of the honorees at the Silicon Valley Business Journal’s annual 100 Women of Influence awards program in November. Be sure to congratulate Marie and Lisa on this honor if you have not done so already!

Arts

Like Athletics, there remain many uncertainties about live performances and other artistic endeavors at the university. Hopefully we will see some clarity in the coming weeks or months.

One thing we do know for certain, however, is we will be offering countless events over at the **Hammer Theatre** for at least the next few decades!

We were delighted in late June to announce a new contract that allows San José State to continue operating the **Hammer Theatre Center** for up to 35 years. This state-of-the-art performance venue has been such a wonderful success these past few years, with a seemingly endless lineup of creative, diverse, and entertaining activities to enjoy.

Whether it is **art, design, theatre, music, poetry, or other kinds of creative talent**, our Spartan creative community takes a back seat to no one! And in the Hammer Theatre, we have a fabulous venue in which we can stage many of these productions. So, we very much look forward to the day in the not-too-distant future when we can resume in-person activity there.

Finally, I wanted to mention this year’s **Campus Reading Program** for the fall incoming first-year class. The book title is “*What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City*,” by the author Mona Hanna-Attisha. As readers soon will learn, Dr. Hanna-Attisha is a true hero for her inspiring efforts to expose the truth about the lead found to be in the tap water in Flint, Michigan. I believe many of the themes in the book—including our

environment, our trust in government, and our collective ability to make change—make it a very relevant book selection for our incoming class and others who take the opportunity to read it.

Facilities

Some of you may recall the new **campus master planning process** that we are implementing, that will address the main and south campuses as well as the University's off-campus properties and connections with the City of San José.

We soon will be launching a **dedicated website** devoted to the planning process, and there will be many opportunities for the campus community to engage starting this fall. Chaired by our Provost Vincent Del Casino, Jr. and our Vice President for Administration and Finance Charlie Faas, an Advisory Committee consisting of students, faculty, staff and administrators will guide the process, which is being undertaken by a collaborative team of planners and architects.

Our Facilities Development and Operations team, particularly the Planning, Design and Construction group, also will help lead the effort. The process will update thoroughly information about all aspects of the campus and will create a vision for the future physical development of the campus. The final stages will include a formal environmental review and approval by the CSU Board of Trustees. So, it will be great to see our new campus master plan develop and begin to take shape.

Economic and social impact study

Lastly, I would like to point out an important study that will take place this year.

We will be partnering with an outside firm to conduct a study to capture the university's economic and social impact on the region, which we feel is significant. We know SJSU is transformative for our students and that our Spartan community contributes locally and globally, and now we will have an independent group demonstrate it through a rigorous study so we can share it with others.

Our consultants are collecting data from various parts of campus, including wages, student enrollment, research grants, alumni connections, diversity and inclusion. They will capture the amazing contributions SJSU makes in our community, so it will be great to see those contributions and impacts formalized and made available to all of our constituents!

Conclusion

As we head into the Fall Semester and continue to move through the current pandemic, I would encourage all of us to think about the rapid change we are all experiencing.

Change has been a constant at San José State, and I remain grateful to those members of the campus community who have shown such a willingness to embrace change. Though it has been uncomfortable at times, our adaptability and support for one another clearly have prepared us for the current crisis in ways that would have been more difficult just a few years ago.

Though we do not know exactly what the future holds or what it will look like, we must continue to place the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff, as well as our commitment to the success and achievements of all of our students, at the forefront. We must embrace change when it serves us well to do so, with resilience and forward-thinking approaches.

Thank you for joining me for this Fall Welcome. Please continue to follow me on Twitter, and subscribe to my blog for frequent posts and announcements. Have a wonderful semester. I look forward to the time when we can gather together in person. In the meantime, be safe, and stay healthy.

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