

2021 Fall Welcome Address
President Mary A. Papazian
August 2021

Introduction and setting the stage

Hello, members of the San José State campus community! I am delighted to welcome all of you to the Fall 2021 semester.

And what a semester this promises to be! I, for one, am very much looking forward to the repopulation of our campus and getting back to some semblance of pre-pandemic normalcy.

Having said that, I know that we all are aware that we are still in the midst of a public health crisis. I very much appreciate how flexible and nimble our campus community has been throughout this period, and I know there remains anxiety for some about our return. As we do repopulate our campus, we must remain vigilant and flexible with our policy guidance and adherence to safety precautions.

I know we will continue to navigate the changing environment with kindness, understanding, and a caring attitude that focuses on the health and safety of all members of our community. Though it has become somewhat of a cliché over these past months, we truly are in this together.

I remain confident that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, especially as more and more in our communities are vaccinated. As things do progress, I am hopeful that a resumption of regular campus life and operations be a refreshing change from the past year-and-a-half. So I hope everyone can remain patient, look after yourselves and one another, and take the steps necessary to help us all return to the campus life that we know and love.

The variety of “welcome back” activities that already are underway for our campus community this fall is just astounding! I appreciate all that everyone is doing to make this semester as special as it can be, despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, for our new and returning students, our faculty and staff, and everyone else who will be visiting us.

To name just a few, there is the **(Re)-Discover SJSU** campaign, a digital platform developed by the Spartan Engagement Committee that showcases all of the wonderful aspects of our university that might easily be missed.

Then there is our traditional “**Weeks of Welcome**”—appropriately known as WOW!—featuring dozens of activities and events designed for all students, but *especially* for our new students as

they transition into our campus community. We have a mix of approaches this year for how Weeks of Welcome can be accessed, with roughly 60 activities in a virtual format, more than 30 in-person, and the rest of them in a hybrid format. We have the activities arranged by themes, such as Academics, Spartan Spirit, Wellness, Social Justice, and Career, to make it as easy as possible for students to find and participate in them.

And a completely new initiative this Fall has been our **Celebration of Faculty and Staff**, which acknowledges the more than 15 months that we all have been away and working remotely. This really has been an effort to shower our staff and faculty with appreciation for all they have done to keep our university going during the pandemic, all in a spirit of coming together and demonstrating how much we treasure each other and the work we all continue to do.

Our “Welcome Back” events, by the way, are not limited to the confines of the campus! I can assure you that the San José community, particularly our downtown business core, has **missed us tremendously** and is looking forward to our return as we once again become part of this thriving urban community.

I hope you will find time to participate in our “welcome back” activities and enjoy everything they have to offer. This has been such an unprecedented period, one hopefully we will never see again, so this is our opportunity to see our campus come back to life and to show this community what Spartan Spirit is all about. And who wouldn’t want to be a part of that?

Incoming class

Now I would like to turn my attention to our incoming Fall class.

Our enrollment numbers have remained strong, even during this past year-and-a-half. In fact, our total Fall 2020 headcount enrollment **exceeded** Fall 2019 by 120 students, and California residents in particular continue to find SJSU an attractive landing spot.

Enrollment for Fall 2021 again will be solid, with total enrollment projected at more than 36,000.

We received more than 45,000 undergraduate applications for Fall 2021 and admitted nearly 26,000 first-time freshmen. Our transfer numbers also are impressive, with well over 10,000 upper division transfer applications. All told, 4,400 freshmen and 4,250 transfer students completed the Intent to Enroll process and thus have committed to attending San Jose State University.

Graduate applications took a small dip over last year’s final numbers, but we expect to enroll a total of 1,750 new regular session credential and graduate students.

In addition to our enrollment numbers, I wanted to take a moment to talk about how we have been working to support our students during the pandemic.

Our university was the beneficiary of nearly \$29 million in federal funding as a part of the Coronavirus Response & Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. This provided direct funding to students who may have experienced loss of employment or other financial support due to the COVID-19 emergency. Another portion of the funding was designated for much-needed institutional support, while just over \$14 million was used to provide direct aid payments to students during the Spring 2021 semester.

In addition to this financial support, our own Financial Aid Office has awarded more than \$98 million in federal, state and institutional financial aid to over 18,000 undergraduate and graduate students to support their Fall 2021 semester studies.

Our students and their families are not immune to the financial struggles that have hit so many throughout the COVID-19 crisis, so we continue in our efforts to assist them as best we can. Our SJSU Cares program remains an excellent clearinghouse of all our student support services, including offerings such as the Spartan Food Pantry, housing assistance, and other resources.

As always—but especially this semester!—we have been working very hard to create all of the right support systems for our new and returning students. Our **Division of Student Affairs**, in particular, has been burning the candle at both ends to make sure our new Spartan students have everything they need in order to settle in comfortably to their new campus environment.

They have done this through various programs, including freshman and transfer orientation that served more than 10,000 new students, as well as a host of pre-college programs.

One new item I would like to call out is a new student success center to support our **Asian Pacific Islander Desi/American** community. This will join other student success centers such as our Black Leadership and Opportunity Center; El Centro, which is our Chicanx/Latinx Student Success Center; and other organizations that support and advocate for historically underrepresented identity groups. The process of establishing this new center is well underway, with plans to recruit its inaugural staff and fund the center's operational and student staffing. We anticipate having more updates this fall, so I hope you will join me in looking forward to that!

Student Affairs also is planning its **5th annual Parent and Family Weekend** in mid-November. After offering the program virtually last year, we are excited to be welcoming our parents, families, and supporters back to campus for an SJSU football game vs Utah State, as well as mini-lectures from our award-winning faculty, workshops by the Career Center, and other activities that we know will engage our Spartan parents and families.

And speaking of engagement, Student Affairs also is rolling out a new first-year engagement program called **Spartan Village**. Think of this as a conceptual small town of sorts, with some 57 virtual houses made up of new first-year students who will be led through various engagement activities by their house leader. It might be considered an extended orientation program, one that will help students with their transition to SJSU, identify resources for them, and maybe even spark some new friendships.

So a huge “Thank you” to all members of our campus community, especially our staff and faculty, for laying the foundation for a wonderful semester for our new and returning students!

Faculty and staff

Now, I would like to say a few words about an incredible group of academic leaders and educators who represent the very best in higher education.

Our recruitment efforts this year resulted in **54 newly-hired, tenure-line** faculty members, with **13 departments** hiring two new tenure-line faculty. In addition, we were delighted to hire **three new tenure-line librarians** to go along with 51 new instructional faculty members.

These exceptional new hires included **Rajorshi Ghosh**, the new department chair in the Department of Art and Art History. Rajorshi comes to us from Ohio University, and his installations, prints, and drawings have been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions at museums and galleries around the world. His research outcomes have taken myriad forms in the form of large-scale site-specific installations, interactive environments, augmented reality based works, works on paper, video and animation films.

Sounds to me like he will fit in beautifully at SJSU! Welcome, Rajorshi.

We also saw the appointment of **Anthony Chow** as our new director of the **School of Information**. Anthony comes to SJSU from the University of North Carolina (Greensboro) where he was an associate professor. Among other highlights of his 21-year career, Anthony has served as a faculty member and a coordinator and director of online learning. He has published two books, two book chapters, and 141 peer-reviewed publications, proceedings, presentations and posters, and he has received more than \$3 million in grants and contracts to fund various research projects.

It is always wonderful when our new faculty members possess deep Bay Area roots, and that is certainly the case with Anthony. Welcome aboard, Dr. Chow!

We are also delighted by a number of other important new additions.

On July 1, we welcomed **Richard Abeyta** as the University Police Department's interim chief. We are in the process of launching a national search for the full time position and will make an announcement when that search process has completed.

In the meantime, we are very fortunate to have someone with Chief Abeyta's professional experience and skill. Perhaps most notably, Chief Abeyta knows our community very well, having previously served as SJSU University Police Chief from June 1988 until July 2004. So welcome back, Chief Abeyta!

We also were pleased earlier this year to welcome **Junelyn Pangan Peeples** as our inaugural Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Analytics!

Among the diverse set of skills and experience Junelyn brings to SJSU are helping institutions like ours demonstrate their value and effectiveness. She also is an expert facilitator and organizer of accreditation and institutional site visits, while at the same time she cultivates teaching and learning pedagogies, fosters student success, and makes use of data and evidence to improve practices, programs, and policies. Welcome aboard, Junelyn!

Our Athletics team is also evolving, with a pair of terrific new additions that I know have our alumni and sports fans excited.

Jeff Konya was announced in June as our new Director of Athletics. I know our campus community will very much appreciate Jeff's commitment to the success of our student-athletes, his integrity, and the innovation he has displayed throughout his career as an award-winning collegiate athletics administrator. Welcome, Jeff!

And Jeff will have a great team around him. Earlier this spring, we brought on board new men's basketball coach **Tim Miles**, and I am confident Tim will elevate that program in similar fashion to what he did at Colorado State and the University of Nebraska. Great to have you with us, Tim!

Institutional Reports (WASC, Economic/Social Impact)

Before I delve into research, grad studies, international programs, the arts and other campus topics, I would like to mention a key, upcoming report that we can anticipate being made available soon.

This actually will be the second important report that we will have seen these past few months, the first being the inaugural **Economic and Social Impact Study** that was released in June. That report, which remains available via our website, offers a detailed look at the tangible influence SJSU throughout the City of San José, the greater Bay Area and the State of California.

Soon, we will unveil the **Western Association of Schools and Colleges Institutional Report**, developed as part of the WASC university assessment. The report really picks up right where the

Economic and Social Impact Study left off, with a very detailed examination of our core competencies, financial health, degree programs, and other elements of our university.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to all those at SJSU - particularly our new Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Analytics for Academic Affairs and the committee who led the effort - who played a role in the development of this report. It takes a tremendous amount of work and effort to pull something like this together, and when the report is released you will see exactly what I mean! So thank you again, and to everyone else, please be on the lookout for the announcement when the report soon becomes available.

Also within the realm of SJSU's overall climate and environment for our students and others, I wanted to assure the campus community that the actions we are taking to address systemic racism will be continuing well into the future. There is no end date for this important work.

I will continue to update you on our progress throughout the semester and academic year, but one milestone we can expect to see soon is the release of a report put together by our **Task Force on Community Safety and Policing**. This team was created to examine the effectiveness of our University Police Department's policies, protocols and community engagement strategies.

This report from our task force has been quite an undertaking but is nearly finalized, so please look for that soon.

Research and Innovation

The **Division of Research and Innovation** is going full speed ahead on all fronts, as they have been throughout this pandemic, and we all should be pleased with the excellent support mechanisms put in place to help our faculty and students grow their research, scholarship, and creative activity (RSCA).

The growth in the extramural grant trajectory fueled by the new Research Development team is particularly impressive. That team already has given individual support for **more than 100 grant proposals** and has developed an entire suite of workshops on the ins-and-outs of successfully garnering funding from federal, state, and local agencies.

Good examples of the many outstanding grants our faculty are receiving this year include a grant for the **Digital Humanities** project from the National Endowment for the Humanities and a grant for the **Wildfire Interdisciplinary Research Center** from the National Science Foundation. Grants like these are so important to our research and creative endeavors and can lead to significant impact across society, so we can look forward to more of these kinds of successes in the near term and into the future.

We also continue to work on ways to support quality RSCA experiences for our students. As part of this commitment, the Office of Research has now launched the new **Student RSCA Grant Initiative** for undergraduate and graduate students. This increases the level of support amount from roughly \$1,000 to \$3,500 for each student project, and it also creates a new mentoring program that more effectively connects students and their faculty mentors that will help our students succeed in the RSCA experience.

As our campus community makes its way through the Fall Semester, I would encourage all of you to follow the progress of our Research and Innovation team and learn about the amazing work of our SJSU Scholars and their wonderful research and creative activity.

Whether you bookmark their website or follow them on their social media channels, keeping abreast of this important work is a great way for our students to learn about San Jose State's research **and researchers** in order to help them identify and expand on their own interests. For our faculty members, activities such as our Faculty Short Talks can help you to connect with your peers and colleagues in ways that might support your own academic work and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. So please check out those and other events that will be coming up throughout the semester.

And lest I forget the Innovation side of "Research and Innovation," the newly formed Office of Innovation already is showing progress and will be launching great new programs this academic year.

The industry-sponsored **Student Research Program**, for example, will help our students engage with industry with opportunities to license their developments.

A new startup incubator is in the works to launch this year in support of our student and faculty entrepreneurs from across campus. In the meantime, the Office of Innovation is active in protecting the intellectual property developed by our faculty and students. For any of you to whom this may apply, I encourage you to connect with the Office of Innovation to help protect your technology and explore opportunities to build and benefit from your intellectual property portfolio.

Graduate studies

Graduate education at SJSU is flourishing as we continue our quest to become known as Silicon Valley's Public Graduate School!

On the doctoral front, the first cohort of students in our independent **Doctor of Nursing Practice** program graduated in May, and we celebrated the one-year anniversary of our new **audiology doctoral program** with the very-first cohort of students as they now embark on their clinical work.

Our **doctoral program in occupational therapy** is on track to accept its first group of students in the 2022-23 academic year, and we now are in active discussions with our colleagues in the University of California system about several possible new **joint Ph.D.** programs.

Our master's students continue to excel. For example, we are very proud of our own **Lupe Franco**, a student in our environmental studies master's program, for winning first place in the SJSU Grad Slam, and for winning the People's Choice award at the first-ever **CSU-wide** Grad Slam, which we hosted virtually in May.

I equally was delighted to see that **Grace Shefcik**, a recent graduate of our master's program in speech language pathology, won the SJSU Outstanding Thesis award for her thesis entitled "Assessment of Non-binary Individuals' Self-Perception of Voice." This truly is important work, and I look forward to seeing more great scholarship from our wonderful graduate students in the coming year.

Other new academic programs

One of the exciting initiatives underway that you will hear more about this upcoming academic year is our **new interdisciplinary honors program** - one that aligns with the SJSU and CSU mission, speaks to the university's commitment to social justice and change, and exemplifies our commitment to equity and diversity.

Many members of the SJSU academic community - including those from Public Health, Business, Music, Science, Religious Studies, Design, Engineering, Education and other disciplines - are determined to take the most effective elements of what we have done in the past, build on some lessons learned, and create an innovative experience that leverages the rich diversity and learned experiences of our students.

We do not yet know precisely what our new Honors program will look like, but I do know that it will center on our commitment as educators to help students address a wide range of societal problems. It will be an Honors Program that builds on the academic excellence of our students, supports their passion for creating a more equitable society, and provides them with tools and mentorship to help realize the social changes they want to make.

I am very encouraged by the entrepreneurial work our **Summer Honors Working Group** has done to date on this initiative. Faculty, students, and advisors have collaborated intensively to imagine a program that draws together our areas of excellence and upholds our Spartan values. We will be sure to share more with you as the reimaging of our Honors program unfolds throughout the semester and the new academic year!

I also wanted to mention something called **REP4**, or Rapid Education Prototyping for Equity, a national alliance of six higher education institutions that you may recently have read about in my blog and campus messaging.

Like our evolving honors program, REP4 is extremely well-aligned with our desire at SJSU to transform many of the approaches and mindsets that have become embedded into higher education for generations. This is an opportunity, along with much of the work taking place in our Lurie College of Education, to help transform higher education in a way that makes it more equitable for our students, and gives them a much more hands-on opportunity to reimagine the education experience.

We recently conducted a regional learner design summit here at SJSU, as well as participated in the first REP4 National Convening. You will continue to learn more about REP4 and our participation in this initiative in the coming months.

Finally, I truly am excited to reveal a very important new initiative that our Office of the Provost and our Interim Vice Provost for Academic Innovation and Online Initiatives is developing.

Tentatively known as **SJSU Online**, this program will begin to address the need more effectively to support the **working adult learner population** in California. Research shows us that nearly 2.3 million Californians between the ages of 25 and 54 have graduated high school and have completed at least one year of college but, for a variety of different reasons, have been unable to complete their college degree.

With SJSU Online, our vision is to expand higher education access and to open new pathways to degree attainment for both these potential Spartans and former Spartans who need new flexible options to enable their return.

Our development of this program is in the early stages, but we can anticipate more information in the coming months.

International programs

As we continue to strive toward our goal of becoming an engaged and dynamic urban university with strong connections locally **and globally**, we recognize that many of San Jose State's current and incoming international students come to us from countries deeply impacted by the pandemic.

In part to support these students and their families, the inaugural **Global Spartan Scholarship** has been created by our College of Professional and Global Education to recognize and provide financial support to our new and continuing international students at both the undergraduate and

graduate levels. The scholarship recipients demonstrate academic excellence, leadership, commitment to globalization and international education, and financial need.

This scholarship program provides an essential boost to help these students move forward with their academic journeys. This fall, 26 students from around the world received a scholarship of \$4,000, including students hailing from China, Columbia, Germany, India, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, South Africa and Vietnam. If anyone doubts our global connections at San Jose State, just back up and listen again to that list of countries, which represents just a handful of the nations that we are proud to include among our student origins!

So I am very pleased at how these scholarships are helping to ensure that our international students can continue to thrive and succeed.

Our broader global education efforts continue to expand as well.

Not only are we engaged in the successful partnership with **Tecnológico de Monterrey** in Mexico on a variety of joint projects that will continue this academic year, but earlier this summer we unveiled a new collaboration with **Manchester Metropolitan University** in Manchester, England. This partnership will entail an international doctoral degree program that prepares individuals for research, faculty, and leadership positions in the field of library and information science.

Our School of Information offers the Gateway PhD program in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan, and I am so excited to see how it unfolds!

There are so many other academic initiatives coming out of our College of Professional and Global Education and other colleges that I just cannot describe them all!

But to cite just a few of them, I will note that we are launching this fall our first online degree completion programs: a **Bachelor of Science in Information Science and Data Analytics** from CPGE, and a **Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a Concentration in Educational and Community Leadership** from our Lurie College of Education. This is all part of our SJSU Degree Completion Program Initiative described above, which offers access and opportunities for those students with some college but no degree.

Also aligned with our goal of increased access to higher education opportunities, our School of Information was awarded the “Bridging Knowledge: Supporting Indigenous Scholars Into the Field of Librarianship” grant by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

This grant will fund 15 Alaska Native, American Indian and Native Hawaiian students to attend our Masters in Library Science program at the iSchool. The award supports our goal of creating access to relevant, high quality educational programs.

Technology

Now onto technology, always an important area at SJSU that underpins so much of what we do. Our technology team has been critical to our ability to pivot to a virtual environment during the pandemic, and I know we all appreciate them very much.

One of the new multi-year initiatives on which our IT is working - a game-changer, really - is a new **Customer Relationship Management** platform. When it is rolled out, this new CRM is expected to help us to engage and promote an impactful experience for all campus community members at all university touchpoints. More details will be forthcoming as we continue to plan for a launch of a phased approach to CRM implementation on our campus, most likely beginning in the second half of fiscal year 21-22. So stay tuned!

Also on the technology front, we are in the process of upgrading the WiFi coverage at the MLK Library with WiFi 6 which I am told will provide consistent high-speed WiFi for students and faculty for the Fall Semester.

This is not merely a “nice to have” upgrade, but actually a vital one for our students and other library patrons.

The updated technology greatly will improve the user experience for students, staff, and faculty members. The enhanced wi-fi also will relieve network congestion and reduce dead spots and drops when students move around the library with their laptops or mobile devices.

So that’s indoor at the library, but what about outdoors on campus?

Well, we have put in place an initiative to blanket the majority of campus’s outdoor spaces with WiFi 6 connectivity by sometime this fall. Our students will love these upgrades! They will provide all new areas for students to study and work while staying safely distanced from others. For faculty, it offers many more options for outside instruction.

Ensuring that our university has a reliable, fast, campus-wide network is a foundational step in our long-term strategy for achieving the vision of our *Transformation 2030* strategic plan. When we look at the list of campus technology initiatives on which we are working —things like integrated cameras, entry sensors, “Internet of Things” devices — almost everything requires an always-on connection. We have to provide our university with a wireless network that is stable and reliable enough to support those systems in addition to the needs of our students and faculty. So I think we can all be excited about the enhancements our IT team continues to develop in this space.

I likely will post a blog piece about our campus's digital transformation in the coming months, but for now I will just say that we continue to drive our campus toward fully online, paperless processes while automating manual administrative processes wherever possible.

Leveraging technology to make our everyday processes easier, more transparent, and more accessible are key hallmarks for any aspiring technology-forward university, particularly one centered in the heart of Silicon Valley. To give you an idea of our progress, close to 3,000 forms have been digitized to date, resulting in nearly a quarter-million automated processes!

There are many other technology features and enhancements that our information technology division continues to roll out, including a Virtual Event solution that is coming soon that will enable larger online gatherings and thus create a richer college experience for students.

Services and products like this enhance our ability to work and learn from anywhere from a variety of devices and platforms, so I encourage everyone to pay close attention to communications from our IT group and take advantage of everything they are making available.

Facilities

Back to MLK Library for a moment. After a 15-month closure, we were pleased earlier this month to welcome students and faculty back to this very important facility, just in time for the new semester!

One of the very exciting new developments at the library is its planned **Digital Humanities Center**. It has had a successful first year fundraising kick-off, raising an initial \$75,000 for its part of a \$375,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Digital Humanities Center is a collaboration between the library and the College of Humanities and the Arts and is planned to open in 2025, so there is plenty of time still to raise the matching funds!

As a lover of poetry and all of the arts and humanities, I cannot begin to express how exciting this project is and what it will mean to our campus community.

You can learn much more on the library's website, but essentially the Digital Humanities Center will marry the wonders and values of the humanities with a rich variety of modern, digital platforms and methods. The openness, experimentation, collaboration, connectedness and diversity themes of digital humanities all will be present and will characterize this new Center. It is going to be amazing, so stay tuned for updates on our progress.

Something else about which you may have heard, a long-term project but a very important one, is our **Campus Master Facilities Plan**. This is a major undertaking that will address the main and south campuses and all of SJSU's other related properties.

In short, our Campus Master Facilities Plan, aligned with the goals of Transformation 2030, will lay out our future vision of the physical campus, guide its development and provide a roadmap for expansion. You can imagine why this is one of the most critical documents we produce at this university, even if it can be a challenge to help some members of our community to focus on it since it is by definition a long-term effort.

Our **Facilities Development and Operations** team will continue developing a process that will be inclusive, collaborative and engaging. So when you receive updates and communications on this effort throughout the semester and coming months, please make note of it and consider how you might participate. It is that important!

Athletics

I will begin to wind down the Fall Welcome with a look at **Athletics** and our **Arts** programs, areas that I like to think of as the two major bookends that serve to engage, enthuse and excite.

All of our Spartan student-athletes, I am sure, are looking forward to welcoming back fans to its campus athletics venues for home events after not being able to host games in some cases for more than a year.

First, however, I think it is important for you to know how our university has been addressing Title IX issues in athletics this past year. As you may know, earlier this year an external attorney investigator whom we retained substantiated claims made by student-athletes alleging inappropriate touching by former athletics trainer, Scott Shaw, dating back to 2009. To those affected student-athletes and their families, I have apologized for our university's breach of trust, and I do so again now. It is absolutely heartbreaking.

The result of the findings prompted me to initiate a second Title IX investigation to determine the adequacy of the original 2009-2010 investigation into Shaw's conduct and how the university responded in the years that followed.

As I shared in my April 2021 message, many immediate action-steps already have been taken including adding significant resources to our Title IX program. We currently are strengthening the Title IX Office and its infrastructure, increasing our education and training and incorporating best practices that we are learning from national experts.

We can and we will do better. I am - we all are - deeply committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment for all our students, staff and faculty.

On the playing field, our 2020 Mountain West champion football team - yes, that same team that generated such incredible excitement last year! - has 62 returning letter winners and 23 starters back from last year's nationally-ranked team. No pressure - we know you will give it your all as you head into the season!

Our Mountain West champion women's tennis team returns its top seven players from the 2021 title team. They and so many of our Spartan athletic teams are looking forward to a successful year.

Earlier I mentioned that joining the San José State family for his first season is men's basketball head coach Tim Miles. Tim's first Spartan coaching victory this season will be his 400th as a men's basketball head coach, so we look forward to celebrating that milestone with him.

We also look forward to an October dedication of our new baseball facility at South Campus, and the start of construction of the Spartan Athletics Center at CEFCU Stadium this fall. So there are a lot of exciting things on the athletics front!

Arts

One aspect of the university and the community at large that is most eager to resume to pre-pandemic life is the **arts!**

I believe we can expect a season of thoughtful and exciting expression and action through the newly launched **H & A in Action** initiative that integrates curriculum and programming in the humanities and the arts. This year, faculty and students will be exploring two contemporary and timely themes: **Sustainable Futures** and **Racial Equity and Social Justice**. There will be guest lectures, bootcamps, panel discussions and workshops, to name just a few programming features, as well as collaborative music projects, art exhibits, and so much more.

I personally am looking forward to a visit to our campus by **Tracy K. Smith**, a Pulitzer Prize winner and recent Poet Laureate of the United States who will recite and talk about her recent poetry collection *Life on Mars*.

The Racial Equity and Social Justice initiative will feature a lecture by the writer, activist and Black feminist Tricia Rose, and a variety of theatrical and musical productions are also on tap. Students also will engage in theater and storytelling workshops on how arts provide avenues of resistance against racism aimed at refugees, and will compare prewar and postwar social climates for Japanese immigrants in San Jose. Students in our Humanities and the Arts courses will have a chance to participate in our *Inclusion Initiative* through a specially-designed pedagogy that offers a tremendously rich collection of plays, music, art exhibits, literary readings, and workshops.

It is wonderful to see how fully our arts and humanities programs and activities are coming back to life this semester. And there is so much more that I simply don't have time to mention, so please check out our College of Humanities and the Arts and the Hammer Theatre websites or subscribe to receive their updates to learn about everything that will be offered this semester and throughout the year.

Conclusion

As I wrap up my remarks, I would like to remind everyone that it was one year ago this month that San José State University was ranked by Money magazine as the #1 Most Transformative University in the nation.

We are extremely proud of that distinction, of course, and it truly is a reflection of the incredible caliber of faculty, staff, and students that comprise our campus community.

There is no way to tell where we will land this year, or in years to come, in Money's rankings. But you know what? It hardly matters.

Certainly, strong rankings are wonderful, and it is always nice when we are recognized for the value we offer to our students and their families.

But we know who we are. We are Spartans, and we transform lives. It really is that simple.

Welcome back to campus, everyone. I hope you have a rewarding semester! Thank you.

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