

# SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY



Dr. Cynthia Teniente-Matson, President

Dear Spartan Community,

Along with the nearly 8,000 graduates who will be honored at our [Spring 2024 commencement ceremonies](#) on May 22–24, SJSU will also recognize two accomplished Spartan alums with honorary degrees.

Ken Noel, '66 BA, '68 MA, Sociology, and Rodney “Rod” Diridon, Sr., '62 Accounting, '64 MBA, embody the Spartan spirit and were catalysts for change during their illustrious careers after graduating from what was then San José State College.

Noel will receive a Doctor of Humane Letter and previously received his Ph.D. in political science from UC Berkeley in 1980. He also co-founded the United Black Students for Action (UBSA) at San José State along with Dr. Harry Edwards. [The UBSA was formed](#) to address housing segregation, unequal and racist treatment of student-athletes and limited educational opportunities for students of color. Noel also worked with the College Commitment Program (CCP), which helped recruit students to San José State who otherwise may not have had a pathway to college. In addition, Noel was one of the founding members of the Olympic Committee for Human Rights, the organizing body that later formed the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR).

Diridon will receive a Doctor of Letters and is known as the “father” of modern transit service in Silicon Valley — having chaired more than 100 international, national, state and local programs, most related to transit and the environment. From 1993 to 2014, he was executive director of the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI), a transportation policy research center created in 1991 by Congress. Today, Rod is still affiliated with the Institute as its Emeritus Executive Director. He frequently provides legislative testimony on sustainability.

We look forward to honoring Noel and Diridon in the coming weeks, and are grateful for the legacies both have left in Silicon Valley and beyond.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cynthia Teniente-Matson

President

(She/Her/Ella)

**SJSU** SAN JOSÉ STATE  
UNIVERSITY

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