

CAMPUS CONVERSATION: ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE
San José State University
February 7, 2007

INTRODUCTION

On February 7, 2007, the San José State University (SJSU) community engaged the theme of Access to Excellence at a campus-wide conversation. At that gathering, the one hundred and sixty seven students, staff, faculty, administrators and community members were asked to identify the strengths of our campus and of the system, consider what we might do better at each level, identify our priorities and determine what we might need to do our best.

Participants were assigned to two consecutive groups. In the first group, each table was assigned a particular domain, from the domains described by the Access to Excellence steering committee. Domains were summarized for participants as follows:

Domain 1: Assuring access through practice and policy by improving P-12 students' academic preparation, addressing the needs of all learners, making pathways transparent.

Domain 2: Connecting to P-12 schools and community colleges through strong and effective partnerships that align expectations, encourage extramural support, meet workplace needs and strengthen teacher preparation at all levels.

Domain 3: Fulfilling commitments to multiple stakeholders, identifying, reaching out to and creating broad-based and strong partnerships; publicizing the CSU's abilities and strengths to demonstrate the benefits of partnering with the CSU; and identifying policy changes to make best use of state resources.

Domain 4: Ensuring success in student learning: assessing student learning, tracking student success supporting student success through advising; engaging students with rigorous programs, traditional and non-traditional pedagogy, participation in faculty research; and preparing students with global cross-cultural competencies and technological capabilities.

Domain 5: Ensuring and supporting faculty and staff excellence to support student success by recruiting and retaining diverse and highly qualified personnel and supporting service excellence to support student achievement, persistence, and satisfaction.

Domain 6: Engaging multiple constituencies in dialogue to define system and campus identity now and in the future by defining and articulating core strengths, shared values and essential identity markers; aligning demand and capacity, and thinking strategically to assure affordability within the context of access and excellence.

Guided by a facilitator, and assisted by a recorder, groups looked at the following questions, with a focus on their particular domains:

- What are the strengths of SJSU and the CSU now, relative to your area?
- What would you like either SJSU or the CSU or both to do better in the future, relative to this area?
- What would have to change to make that happen? Can technology facilitate the change, and if so, how?

Participants were then asked to regroup, such that new tables would have representation from each of the six domains. With the support of a facilitator and a recorder, groups addressed the following question:

- From an SJSU perspective, and considering our own strategic plan, what are the three most important issues a CSU strategic plan should address and why?

Finally participants completed a form that identified their constituency (student, staff, faculty, administrator, community), and asked the following question:

- Irrespective of anybody else's priorities or anything discussed in your groups today, what do you consider to be the single highest priority or SJSU and for the CSU in the future, and why?

The following summarizes the main themes that surfaced in the group conversations with additional reflections from individual responses. A tally and a full listing of individual responses are attached as appendices. By far the greatest number across all constituencies expressed concern for faculty workload and connected faculty workload and compensation to the overall quality of the students' experience.

WHAT WE DO WE WELL

SJSU does well at the most important job a university can do: We take our students where they are, and help them succeed. Many of our students are the first in their families to go to college, and many of them come to the university under-prepared to engage university level work, but this community welcomes them and makes it possible for them to grow, with intentions, strategies and

programs based in learning and belonging. We offer a great education at rates that are reasonable in comparison to both local and national tuition rates. As one participant commented, our commitment is to "educate graduates who are free and thoughtful citizens, rather than technicians."

On our 150th anniversary year, we note that we are indeed the place where "tradition meets the future." Our location, at the heart of Silicon Valley, places us in the forefront of innovation. We connect with and serve the business community as well and we're responsible for a large part of workforce development in our area. It was especially noted that SJSU prepares the great majority of teachers for this area.

We have a long established tradition of connection with our educational community, and successfully outreach to students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. We work consistently with local middle and high schools as well as community colleges to communicate the value of a four-year degree and facilitate access. We are doing an especially good job with incoming freshman. Freshman orientation and the Metropolitan University Scholars Experience (MUSE) and its concomitant Peer Mentor Program, provide an excellent platform for moving ahead with a successful college experience. We attract a diverse group of students, and our focus on inclusive excellence, derived from our own strategic planning initiative, is guiding us toward using our diversity as a resource in multiple dimensions.

We have a sense of community and strong connection with the City of San José. SJSU is an urban campus, and our students benefit from the cultural and intellectual depth and diversity of our area. Facilities development has beautified our campus, and made this a more attractive place to work and study than it was in the past. In addition, development of the athletics program has benefited students and attracted the attention of alumni.

The dedication of faculty and their interest in student welfare and success are important strengths. SJSU has a commitment to excellent teaching. Students receive instruction from professors, not from teaching assistants. Professors are available to our students, and enhance student learning by engaging them in their own research. Service learning is a well supported approach on our campus and offers opportunities for carefully structured hands-on learning experiences.

WHAT WE MIGHT DO BETTER

A substantial number of reflections about how we might better serve students are tied, in some respect, to the issue of funding. As one individual noted, "Excellence is expensive. Mediocrity is cheap." We lack the resources to do the job we are asked to do. Our facilities are out of date, and we have out-dated or insufficient technology. We do not have the time or support for professional

development to allow us to engage the new technologies systematically so as to improve instruction and student services. Several groups and individuals commented on the negative impact of unfunded mandates. Simply put, one participant commented, "An unfunded dream is a nightmare."

Participants noted repeatedly in both group and individual responses that faculty and staff are insufficiently compensated. Participants across the entire community (students, faculty, administration, staff) want the system to address the question of faculty workload. Under-market compensation and faculty workload impact the University's ability to recruit and retain excellent faculty and staff in general, and our ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff from under-represented groups and in high demand areas in particular. It was noted that lecturers are well received and welcomed among the faculty. Nevertheless, increasing the ratio of tenure/tenure track faculty to temporary faculty is essential to reduce workload.

Insufficient compensation is perceived as a system-wide issue, but participants pointed out that it is a particular problem at SJSU because the cost of living in this area is exceptionally high and literally makes it impossible for potential faculty and staff to consider coming here. One person remarked, "Higher salaries of significant others are saving this university!"

It was repeatedly and emphatically noted that under funding and overloading faculty has a negative impact on the faculty's ability to serve students. The current generation of students brings different learning styles, and faculty need time and professional development to rethink and retool the curriculum to meet their needs. Students are most effectively engaged through hands-on approaches, and faculty would like more time to engage students in faculty research. Lack of funding is particularly detrimental to our ability to serve graduate students and support advanced research. SJSU has a large component of graduate students.

The general public does not understand the way these constraints operate. It is incumbent, therefore on the system has two jobs to do: Educate the public to bring pressure to bear on the legislature to increase funding and make the case to the legislature that the system needs additional support. One participant commented, "Aren't we supposed to be telling the CSU to educate the legislature about this problem? If every campus says this is a problem, won't they listen? . . . Isn't that why we're here?"

A second area where participants repeatedly articulated need for improvement is services to students, with a particular emphasis on advising. Students need more advising, better advising and advising from faculty. This is again tied to the resource issue in several dimensions. On our campus, we have an insufficient number of general education advisers due to unfilled positions. Financial aid also suffers from insufficient staffing. Improved technology would mitigate some of

the difficulties, but staff and faculty need time to look for and learn new tools. Faculty with strong advising skills should be rewarded for their work. It was noted, however, that student services should not come at the price of higher fees. Students are quick to point out that for the population we serve, accessibility is inevitably related to affordability.

Another area of concern is student preparedness for university work. The SJSU community is committed to supporting students and fostering student success, but also sees the need for strong support from the P-16 community. We have ongoing and extensive partnerships with P-12 schools and community colleges. Expansion of programs like dual-enrollment and Counselors on Campus is recommended. In addition, the CSU system as a whole should advocate for adequate and equitable resources for K-12 schools. Access to excellence should start in preschool for all students, or as one participant put it, "Higher expectations must start long before college!"

Diversity poses challenges for our campus. SJSU is diverse by virtue of its location and circumstances. Because we represent so many different cultures and languages, our students have a circumstantial exposure that they may not find at other universities. We should, however, explore our diversity in greater depth and breadth. We could do more to recruit and retain a more diverse faculty, staff and administration. We can also consider ways to use our diversity to enrich our curriculum.

Responses indicate a strong interest in international education. It was noted that our diversity provides a framework for thinking about international education and a globalized curriculum. For example, we have a linguistic resource on our campus. Participants endorsed the idea that all our students should graduate with global understandings, perspectives and skills. We'd like our students to learn languages and have more opportunities to study abroad.

Communication and technology received a great deal of attention in the conversation. Communication is essential, but several participants expressed reservations about the tension between highly centralized services and local decision-making. Participants seem to favor centralized services to support local campuses where efficiencies and economies of scale and standardized information are useful, but express a caution that each campus has its own needs and its own culture. Technology is perceived as a useful tool. On-line services and instruction have their places, but the efficiencies they offer do not necessarily adequately replace person-to-person interaction.

Finally, we should market our strengths. We need to brand the system and our campus. We should do a better job communication the value that we deliver. We should establish ourselves as the leader in quality, affordable education.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO THE JOB?

- This campus wants clear priorities, and not too many of them. It wants transparency in the disposition of resources. And it doesn't want any more unfunded mandates.
- The campus wants students who are as prepared as possible for a university experience. We value and support extensive partnerships with the P-16 community, but ask the system to use its collective energy and weight to call for equitable and sufficient funding for all schools for all children.
- We need up-to-date infrastructure. Technology is important, but should be seen as a tool for to facilitating all of our operations and especially to enhance student services. Technology cannot replace human interaction and personal supports that are key to student success. Centralized administrative technology should be used where there are efficiencies and economies of scale, but individual campuses should be encouraged to devise solutions tailored to their own challenges and needs.
- Resources. The big topic is resources, parsed to include faculty compensation and workload, staff compensation and workload, adequate funding for initiatives, new facilities and adequately maintained facilities, technology and the time to learn to use it, all in aid of providing excellent, personal, user-friendly services for students in an attractive up-to-date campus environment that builds community and supports student success.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The SJSU community cares deeply about its students and works hard to foster the learning and belonging that undergird student success. We often don't have what we need. The challenge to the CSU system is to provide the campuses with support in the form of administrative support, resources and advocacy at every level.

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 INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

FUNDING/RESOURCES IN GENERAL
<p>What the students said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CSU is an extremely important asset to the state of California. We must request full funding from the state. Sustaining quality and reaching our goals requires resources. If we continue to raise fees and rely on outside funding for mere sustainability, we are doomed to lower quality education and services.
<p>What the staff said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eliminate redundancies. Minimize bureaucracy. Students are confused, staff and faculty are worn out. We need to clean up our act. - Adequate funding! Deferred maintenance, deferred salary increases, deferred staff increases – too much deferred leads to increased workload and decreased effectiveness and follow through. We're teaching students for the 21st century with 19th century tools and 20th century facilities. - Funding – Both SJSU and the entire CSU are grossly under-funded. - Financial security to attract top-notch faculty, free us from the ups and downs of the state budget, and lend prestige to attract outside funding. A large endowment shows that we are here to stay. - Prioritize and allocate resources accordingly. - Resources, but look at what and how we do what we do and “right-size” our plates. Rarely is anything cut. We just keep adding, and quality service is attained at the expense of staff and faculty quality of life and wellness. The institution supports workaholism. - Decide what the campus will stop doing. - If you build it, plan to staff it. We need enough staff.
<p>What the faculty said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set priorities and fund them well. - We need funding to achieve excellence: An unfunded dream is a nightmare. - More resources and more resource transparency. More faculty input in setting priorities. - Please, no unfunded mandates! - If the state is serious about remaining the 5th or 6th largest economy, it should be giving much more funding to the workhorse of CA higher education. - Improve private support to alleviate burdens: create partnerships to access financial and human resources in the community including alumni and business.
<p>What administrators said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Become more political in influencing the legislature and the community to understand the need for greater financial support for higher education. - Funding for faculty and staff. Especially consider the high workloads and the high cost of living in the Silicon Valley. - Establish a very limited number of priorities with sufficient resources. We can't do everything at once, with the same level of urgency, and/or without resources.

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- Narrow down our priorities to a manageable number and fund them well.
- Consider establishing a per unit differential fee structure (by major) coupled with year round operation in order to generate sufficient revenue to allow each campus to achieve its priorities.
- Align the overall resources with true costs and needs. Recognize issues such as cost of living, the cost of instruction and the cost of scholarship.

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FACULTY/STAFF: RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, COMPENSATION, WORKLOAD

What the community said:

- Money to maintain or hire professors to lower class loads and provide the education needed for students.
- Keep highest quality faculty with pay, lower class size and innovative programs. It is difficult in Silicon Valley to retain high quality educators when the salaries are so much higher in the businesses in the valley.

What the staff said:

- Recruit and retain quality faculty members and allow them the time to guide and interact with students
- Recruit and reward the best faculty
- Incentives for effective teaching are blurred. Create a reward system, allocate resources, foster faculty-student relationships and a community of learning, consider teaching loads
- Faculty all need to be compensated appropriately. Take into consideration the cost of living in the area they live in. Development has to be provided for all employees, conferences, training, or simply time to attend events on campus.
- More and more is piled on the faculty. There is only so much a person can do without cutting corners or burning out. IF you have a happy, productive, motivated faculty, you will have a strong foundation for the future.
- Academic rigor: attract and retain quality, multicultural/racial/ethnic/lingual faculty to support the diverse student body.

What the faculty said:

- Faculty are overloaded and find it more and more challenging to go that extra mile.
- We need intellectual, financial and workload incentives to recruit and retain a diverse, talented, innovative faculty. Resources for faculty growth must parallel growth in the student body, or the CSU will only be giving its students access to mediocrity. The same incentives need to be in place for staff.
- Our number one priority is our students. Give the faculty the type of workload that will enable them to include students in their research.
- Excellence, faculty pay, release time for research and program development, space planning based on programmatic needs not politics, all address excellence.
- Consideration of market rate compensation for high level CSU and campus administrators is a higher priority than consideration of compensation for faculty and staff. This underlines enthusiasm and morale. Faculty and staff are asked to sacrifice while executives are engaged in self-dealing on a par with executives in private enterprise.
- Recognition of effort, cost of living and quality of life issues for faculty and students.
- Hire and retain excellent faculty.
- Faculty are overloaded. Address workload and resources in general.
- Faculty workload: address pay rates taking into account the cost of living.
- Find a way to reduce faculty workload. Faculty are overworked and underpaid. It is difficult to teach a 4/4 load, attend conferences, conduct research, publish, advise students and engage in service without compromising excellence in some area.

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- Give faculty recognition for their excellent work – pay, reduced teaching loads, help with housing costs, better working environments, anything to make the best want to stay in the CSU. We're losing them now, and soon we'll be losing more.
- More tenure track faculty, less reliance on part-time faculty.
- Invest in faculty – you get what you pay for. Provide adequate salary for recruiting, retention and morale, provide time, i.e., reduce workload. Increase the ration of permanent to full time faculty.
- Develop a common direction from the Chancellor's Office related to generalized safety on campus. Minimum safety standards are not in place on campus. The Chancellor's office must ensure a safe environment for faculty, staff and students.

What administrators said:

- Quality faculty and staff given sufficient resources and time to do their jobs well.
- Address faculty compensation
- Address growing imbalance between permanent and temporary faculty.
- To make SJSU a university of choice for students, it must first become a university of choice for faculty, which means competitive workload and salary.
- Faculty workload and pay.
- Faculty morale and recognition
- Define the teacher/scholar model and fund it.
- Student centered learning/research, active community outreach and global programs are all hallmarks of excellence, but not all faculty should be expected to perform all with a 4/4 teaching requirement. Allocate faculty workload in order to be able to hold colleges and administration accountable.
- Fund release time for faculty, staff and administrators to pursue outside funding that would support programs for students; invest time and money in professional development for faculty.
- We must address faculty workload, faculty compensation and urban area cost of living. The CSU must deal with CFA and the legislature.

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P-12

What the students said:

- We need to bridge the gap between K and college, helping local school districts and creating support networks.
- The most important thing is to reach out to high school students to make college a reality. Students don't always have access to information about higher education

What the staff said:

- The CSU should consider the K-12 system as the single most important pipeline for student preparedness.
- Bridge the gap between K-12 education and college readiness. Make the transition transparent. Reach out to communities.
- Take institutional steps to make CSU part of the larger community. Build a continuum from school to college and from college to post-college life.
- Level the playing field for incoming students. Work with K-12 and community colleges so that all students have an equal chance for success in the CSU system.
- Provide leadership to improve the K-12 educational experience to provide the CSU with better prepared students. Ensure that we offer quality classes in sufficient numbers and at sufficient times to allow these students to complete their degrees in a reasonable time frame.

What the faculty said:

- Improve advising
- Develop public awareness of the importance of K-16 education.
- Create a statewide agenda for the future of education in California, based on the concrete needs and issues that we are facing and taking that agenda forcefully to the legislature, business and the public so they understand and support it.
- Develop a holistic and comprehensive relationship with K-12 schools to develop the education of our students, addressing issues like first generation college students, immigrant children and disenfranchised communities. Build on that through innovative student support programs and collaborations that address the real needs of our students.
- Student preparedness: Too many students are not able to take advantage of what they are being offered here, can't do basic math or writing. Students tell us they are not being challenged. Higher expectations must start long before college.

What administrators said:

- Preparation for students before they get to college; support for students once they're here.
- Work closely with P-12 students to lay the foundation for an educated and qualified student body. Work with CSU and state legislators to encourage and provide resources to improve education, P-12

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SERVICES TO STUDENTS/STUDENT NEEDS/ADVISING/INSTRUCTION

What the students said:

- Hire more GE advisors and strengthen the lines of communication between major and GE advisors
- Eliminate the bureaucratic hurdles facing students all the way through, including, but not limited to registration, advising, financial aid, paying fees
- Access is related to affordability. As the CSU moves from state funded to state assisted, many students will be lost.
- Provide resources for advising, student services
- Diversify the faculty
- Make faculty and staff accountable for how they treat students. Staff are first in line with students and should give great customer service. Be responsive to student complaints.

What the staff said:

- Focus on student retention
- Improve advising and communicate with students about processes, paperwork, deadlines related to every aspect of students' experience
- Increase resource to improve and personalize academic advising students. Consider advising as an important part of faculty responsibility, but don't stack on more and more duties without considering the workload.
- Focus on the student experience and ensure that academic success is a priority in and out of the classroom.
- Recruitment, retention, graduation
- Address the quality of administrative services immediately.

What the faculty said:

- Administrative support and services for students: revamp institutional services so as to better serve students; offer sincere help and support, don't send them off to another line or desk
- Retention!! We need to provide more support via mentoring, advising, financial aid, "safe spaces," consistent information.
- Students need faculty and staff mentors to help them deal with their non-academic issues.
- More emphasis on educational excellence and less on numbers.
- On campus advising is the biggest issue; off-campus, but not unrelated, we must educate students who are thoughtful citizens, rather than technicians.
- Focus on global education, including foreign language and cultural competence. Move past the abstract to real world experiences, including study abroad and area studies.
- Empower students to take ownership of their own educations.

What administrators said:

- Get everyone on the same page about advising in the broadest sense from initial outreach and recruitment through graduation and beyond.
- Provide better training for faculty and staff to support advising, better communication that will enable students to get through the system without pain
- Strengthen academic advising from start to finish.

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- Meet the needs of underserved students. Find out why certain students are not successful in the CSU. Have the courage to devise new solutions.
- Infuse international components throughout the curriculum to prepare students for success in the global workforce.
- Make sure students develop global perspectives and intercultural/multicultural understandings to compete in a global environment and serve as informed and effective global citizens in the 21st century.
- Develop the reputation as an institution/system that prepares students through quality liberal education to be productive global citizens.

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OUTREACH/MARKETING
What the students said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Publicize the value of our research
What the staff said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prioritize community outreach in an inclusive manner: locally (school districts, businesses), regionally (state organizations, government), nationally and internationally.- CSU should market its strengths, distinguish itself from the UC and other institutions- SJSU needs a brand – name brand connections guide students' choice of university- Communicate the value of what we deliver. Shed the image of being cheap.
What the faculty said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Demonstrate our worth. Give us the resources to make what faculty and staff do innovative and sustainable.- Develop quality standards in all areas – academic, HR, finance, student support. Develop a reputation for quality and use that reputation to secure the resources we need from the public and the legislature.
What administrators said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Communicate the message that the CSU is a key part of making California a strong, healthy, innovative and productive society and economy.

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TECHNOLOGY
What the students said:
What the staff said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Harness technology for improvement of the system as a whole, especially to keep information updated.- Adequate resources and technology are necessary to improve the quality of information and provide the very best services.- Build a systematic process for collecting and organizing input from faculty staff and students. Improve our technology infrastructure.- We need better overall communications.- Utilize our current technology for simple, user-friendly access to information. Streamline processes and maintain up-to-date information.
What the faculty said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improve access to technology for all students- Use technology at the administrative level wherever it creates efficiencies and economies, but be careful about pushing workload “down.”
What administrators said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Process improvement: a user/customer focus for systems. We focus too much on processes that serve our internal needs (and not very well), rather than serving our constituencies. Cut the bureaucracy!- Communicate with the public about CSU, with a view to making an impact on the funding available to the system- Use technology where it works best: let the technology handle the work efficiently, let the people support student success.- Centralize some functions and also allow campuses to innovate on others.