

**REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
SPECIAL VISIT**

To San Jose State University

September 26-27, 2017

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

This report of the special accreditation visit to the San Jose State University (SJSU) is a follow up to the re-accreditation review conducted in 2015. In that review, the evaluation team raised a number of concerns about leadership, organizational climate, shared governance and diversity. In acting on the team’s report, the accrediting commission granted SJSU reaccreditation for seven years, and called for a special visit to take place in the spring of 2017, focused on the issues of leadership, organizational climate, shared governance, and diversity. The special visit timetable was moved at the request of the university to the fall of 2017 subsequent to the appointment of a new president in 2016. This report of the special visit focuses only on the major issues raised in the prior review; it is not a comprehensive visit of all aspects of the institution. The evaluation team is substantially the same as the 2015 team.

A. Description of Institution

San Jose State University (SJSU), situated on 154 acres in downtown San Jose, in the heart of Silicon Valley, is the oldest in the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system—it was founded in 1857 and became the first institution of public higher education in California (CSU website). SJSU is an institution with a long tradition and an important role within the CSU and in California. Its mission is “to enrich the lives of its students, to transmit knowledge to its students along with the necessary skills for applying it in the service of our society, and to expand the base of knowledge through research and scholarship.” Its proximity to Silicon Valley provides it with a great opportunity to not only educate the future citizens of California and of the world but also create a workforce that can be competitive and informed in all professions recognized today and those to be developed in the future.

SJSU is a comprehensive university with eight colleges (Applied Sciences & Arts; Business; Education; Engineering; Humanities & the Arts; International & Extended Studies; Science; and Social Sciences). The university offers programs in a variety of academic and professional fields, and degrees include bachelor's, master's, joint doctorate, and doctorate, plus a variety of certificates and teaching, service, and specialist credentials. It offers 81 bachelor's degrees (145 with all concentrations), and 73 master's degrees (96 with all concentrations) across eight colleges. In 2012, SJSU offered its first doctoral level program (a joint Doctor of Nursing Practice program with CSU Fresno). In 2014, SJSU admitted its first cohort to its new EdD program in Educational Leadership. The academic calendar operates year-round and is organized into a semester system.

SJSU had a full time equivalent (FTES) enrollment of 32,157 students as of Fall 2016. Nearly 75% of students come from Bay Area counties (with 40% originating from Santa Clara County), and 90% of students are California residents. The university is ethnically diverse, with over 80% of the students from minority populations (Asians comprise the largest component, at 42%; followed by Hispanics, at 25%). Distinctive from other CSUs, SJSU has a virtually equal distribution between male and female students, and the average age of undergraduate students is 22.6 years. The university is predominately undergraduate in nature, with 83% of all students enrolled (among the top majors

are design studies, psychology, kinesiology, biological sciences, and business). The top five most popular graduate programs are software engineering, electrical engineering, computer engineering, library & information science, and industrial engineering (SJSU Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Analytics).

The hospitality extended to the evaluation team by SJSU was most gracious and appreciated. The team appreciated the candor, as well as the open and forthright manner in which comments were made in all of its interactions. The institution provided convenient and comfortable meeting rooms, as well as technical support to assist with the team's technology needs. The team's requests for additional information during the visit were met with a high degree of responsiveness.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The evaluation team met with SJSU administrators, including leadership teams concerned with student affairs, as well as academic affairs. Meetings held with other key groups included the African American/Black Student Success Center, the Chicanx/Latinx Student Success Center, the UndocuSpartan Program, Student Resource Centers, the "4 Pillars Team," and faculty representatives from the Senate Executive Committee and the Accreditation Review Committee. Open forums were also held with students, faculty, and staff.

C. Institution's Special Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

The university prepared the special report addressing the focused issues of leadership, organizational climate, shared governance, campus climate, and diversity. The report contained appropriate documentation supporting its narrative.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

A. Issue: Leadership, Organizational Climate, and Shared Governance

Leadership and Organizational Climate

Following the WSCUC site visit in 2015, the president resigned. An interim president served during the 2015-16 academic year, with SJSU's 30th (and now current) president appointed in July 2016. The interim report stated that "five of eight cabinet members (were) appointed within the last year," but it is important to note that the remaining three members have a relatively short tenure in the cabinet as well: provost, 2013; vice president for student affairs, summer 2015; and vice president for university advancement and CEO of the Tower Foundation, summer 2015. The cabinet level changes have continued, which is expected to some extent when there are presidential transitions. The team heard a sense of optimism from members of the SJSU community during the Special Visit about the new leadership, but also recognized that many of the cabinet members are fairly new. Cabinet-level

transitions will likely continue, and there appear to be many transitions at the dean's level as well. This level of senior leadership turnover, while not unusual in higher education, could be a continuing source of tension as reorganizations and changes in plans often accompany personnel changes. Overall, the optimism the team heard about the future was tempered by a sense of fatigue from staff over the numerous transitions, especially middle managers, and a resolute sense of commitment from faculty (CFRs 3.6, 3.7).

Shared Governance

In a document shared with the evaluation team entitled, "The State of Shared Governance at San Jose State University," the SJSU Academic Senate Chair described dramatic improvements in shared governance that have taken place in the last two years. In particular, the document credited both the interim president and current president with fully engaging the senate leadership in discussion and open dialogue, as well as the sharing of information and ideas. The senate has also seen stability in leadership which has reinforced the development of stability of shared governance. In a meeting with the evaluation team, the president described the distinction between shared governance and co-management, and the importance of providing clarity around shared governance to reduce misunderstandings. During

the Special Visit, members of the President's Cabinet stressed the importance of having common goals and more transparency to facilitate shared governance.

The Special Visit Report cited several new initiatives that improve shared governance at the university. These include establishing a permanent Accreditation Review Committee (ARC), comprised of key members of the senior administration, with representation from faculty and student leaders, and the president's decision to have each cabinet level search be chaired by a faculty member. These new initiatives are an attempt to bridge any distance or concerns about faculty involvement in shared governance. These changes will create more consistent oversight, transparency and leadership on issues important for the university's growth and forward movement (CFRs 3.6, 3.7).

Another positive sign of shared governance was led by the interim president in 2015. The faculty senate passed a resolution in 2015 that affirmed four guiding principles of SJSU shared governance related to collegiality, engagement of appropriate stakeholders, wide consultation on the part of all campus governing bodies, and regular and transparent communication with community stakeholders.

The Special Visit Report also noted that the president holds regular meetings with the chair of the academic senate and other faculty-led groups, and engages in “listening tours” with the colleges. However, faculty noted that the president and chief of staff are less engaged with the senate than the most recent interim president. While faculty praised the president for careful, thoughtful and transparent decision-making and willingness to engage in open discussions, it expressed a desire to have more engagement with the Senate Executive Committee and a need for the goodwill of the president and Senate Executive Committee to “trickle down” to the colleges and departments where some elements of strife and the effects of leadership turnover continue.

In a reorganization of student academic services, the Division of Academic Affairs has formed an Office of Student and Faculty Success which now includes not only traditional student success services such as advising, peer connections, and TRIO programs, but also faculty development and community leadership. At the same time, a new Associate Vice President of Transition and Retention Services position was created and filled in the Division of Student Affairs with responsibilities for oversight of EOP (Educational Opportunity Program) and student success task forces.

The report also notes that there has been a very significant increase in faculty hiring in the last two years, with over one hundred new hires in that period, and with another sixty +/- planned recruitments in the next year. The result of this will be that in the next five to ten years nearly a third of the faculty will have been hired. As is standard as part of this process, new faculty are given reduced teaching loads in order to support their scholarly development. The faculty hiring process has been decentralized at the institution, so responsibility for faculty recruitments lies with the deans and department chairs. While this decentralization of faculty recruitment seems to be working well at the institution, it may inadvertently be a missed opportunity to create the types of cross disciplinary and applied curricula needed to keep San Jose State University at the cutting edge of academic reform. As the strategic plan is further developed, it will be important for the campus to connect that back to faculty recruitment and development (CFRs 3.1, 3.3, and 4.7).

The integration of student success efforts with faculty success is an unusual and potentially promising arrangement; the team was told it was motivated by the premise that student success also requires faculty success. For this to succeed, it will be important for those functions to be supported by an academic vision that seamlessly connects faculty development with curriculum and course planning, faculty recruitment and turnover planning, academic advising, and student support

services. The data needed to better understand the relationship between student success and faculty will also need to be developed, something that the team notes has not happened to date (CFRs 2.11, 2.13, 3.3, and 4.1).

Strategic planning processes were revised under the interim president in 2016 to close out the previous strategic planning process (*Vision 2017*) and initiate the next planning cycle built around inclusiveness, transparency and shared governance. A new policy (S16-3) resulted in the formation of a Strategic Planning Steering Committee, which is part of the Academic Senate and co-chaired by the provost and chair of the senate. The Steering Committee is expected to act in an advisory role to the president as well as a resource to the campus. The policy and the committee are aimed at engaging the entire university in all stages of the strategic planning process.

With the arrival of the current president on July 1, 2016, the new strategic planning process got underway. A campus strategic planning kick-off occurred on September 14, 2017, and a number of campus conversations took place September 20 and 21, 2017, shortly before the arrival of the evaluation team. The event was well attended, including 50 tenured faculty members. The institution will continue to gather input from the community via online sessions and surveys. Overall, the campus

community seemed pleased with the openness of the campus conversations about strategic planning and with the president's plan to take the time needed to ensure that the process is transparent and inclusive and encourages 'aspirational thinking.'

In addition to a policy regarding strategic planning, under the interim president a policy was passed reestablishing the Budget Advisory Committee (policy F15-9, November 2, 2015) tasked with engaging the campus community in understanding and providing feedback on budget issues, as well as providing feedback and recommendations to the president. This was noted as a positive development by the faculty senate. The Budget Advisory Committee is to be co-chaired by the Vice Chair of the Academic Senate and the Vice President for Administration & Finance/CFO, thus clearly establishing the importance of shared governance in regard to issues regarding resources. The new administration has also placed an emphasis on involvement of faculty in key decisions; for example, a faculty member serves as chair of cabinet level search committees, and the Chair of the Faculty Senate serves on the Tower Foundation Board of Directors. In addition, the administration has forged stronger ties with faculty through regular meetings of the president with the Senate Chair and by having the new Chief Diversity Officer serve on both the President's Cabinet and the Senate Executive Committee. The president also formed the President's Leadership Council that meets monthly, which has as

its membership leaders from all divisions, and whose purpose is to provide feedback on issues of importance to the campus as a whole.

All told, these efforts indicate a dramatic change from the *2015 Campus Climate Survey* that showed fairly widespread dissatisfaction with campus leadership and skepticism about the openness of communication. Further, the four guiding principles indicated in a Spring 2015 Sense of the Senate Resolution (SS-S15-6), namely collegiality, engagement of stakeholders in problems and formulations of solutions, wide consultation by campus governing bodies, and regular, transparent communication, appear to be well addressed by the ongoing efforts of the university to improve shared governance and shared decision-making. SJSU is applauded for these significant efforts and is encouraged to maintain this momentum of change and improvements in shared governance (CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 3.10, and 4.3).

Other organizational changes to improve governance and decision-making have also occurred within administrative units in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. For example, all functions in regard to human resources, including those that were previously in Academic Affairs, have been combined with the broader university human resources functions, reporting to the Chief of Staff/Vice President of Organizational Development, in order to ensure consistency. In general, the faculty

and administrators in Academic Affairs seemed pleased with this organizational change.

Commendations:

SJSU administration is to be commended for its positive momentum in regards to shared governance, as it has demonstrated strong engagement and widespread consultation with faculty in decision-making.

SJSU is to be commended for its efforts towards promoting inclusiveness in its strategic planning efforts.

B. Issue: Campus Climate and Diversity

Campus Climate and Diversity

In spring 2015, all members of the campus community, both employees and students, were invited to participate in a campus climate survey that was designed by the campus. Nearly 7,000 responses were gathered, which indicated issues revolving around safety, communication, and sense of community, as well as dissatisfaction with campus leadership. The campus is planning to administer another campus climate survey in spring 2018, although the survey will likely be different in terms of methodology and scope. The campus is commended for embarking on another campus climate survey and is encouraged to consider adopting a survey instrument that will enable benchmarking with other institutions.

In each of the meetings that the evaluation team conducted with various groups, there appeared to be much optimism as to the apparent consultative nature of the current administration, as well as an overall sense that the campus climate had significantly improved. A notable exception to this were the comments from staff. There was a tone of cautious optimism, however, given the continuous turnover in university leadership over the years, staff expressed frustration and fatigue over changes in upper level and cabinet positions, as well as in organization. The term, “second class” citizens was used by some to describe how they are perceived at the university. It was mentioned by one group that direct communications with the Provost was prohibited at one point, which was a departure from past practice. It is clear that SJSU must pay closer attention to staff concerns, and take steps to address these issues (CFRs 3.2, 3.3).

In addition, in spring 2017, the campus administered the *NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement)* to freshman and senior students. With a response rate of over 40% (more than 4,000 responses), the campus has the data to enable an in-depth analysis of student engagement and to compare those responses to the last administration of the *NSSE* in 2014. Preliminary analyses were shared with the evaluation team, which indicated few improvements in student responses, particularly among seniors, since 2014. The campus is encouraged to analyze and

disseminate these findings soon to facilitate efforts to improve student satisfaction and performance (CFR 2.10).

An area of particular concern that was voiced by a variety of people concerned advising services for students. While efforts have been made to improve academic advising through the formation of Student Success Centers in the colleges and by hiring more advisors, individuals expressed dissatisfaction with advising as students reported rude and culturally insensitive behaviors of advisors as well as an inability to see advisors in a timely manner. The team also learned in meetings with various groups (staff, students) that some advisors were providing inconsistent/inaccurate advising information, and were perhaps not sufficiently attuned to the needs of students with disabilities, first generation college students, and/or veterans. Complaints concerning advising from the aforementioned groups resonated from two reports, “Assessing Overall Climate for Military Veterans at SJSU (Klaw, RSCA Report 2017),” and “Why Do Students Leave? A Study of Student Departure from SJSU.” Thus, SJSU is encouraged to continue efforts to further improve advising services (CFRs 2.12, 2.13).

A more positive development is the formation of the “4 Pillars” team comprised of and co-led by Academic Affairs and Student Affairs managers. This group is

focused on addressing obvious, operational issues that impede student success, such as bottleneck courses, and on providing more co-curricular and curricular activities to improve student engagement, to name a few. They are examining metrics of success and setting targets for the colleges to measure effectiveness. The 4 Pillars team is commended for their “get it done” attitude and encouraged to continue their progress on making a difference. The evaluation team suggests that 4 Pillars activities should align with other efforts related to student engagement in Student Affairs, the African American/Black and Chicanx/Latinx Student Success Centers, the UndocuSpartan Program, and Student Resource Centers.

A consistent theme that the evaluation team heard in its meetings was that the hiring of a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) was widely viewed as a very positive commitment by the university to address issues that have surfaced at the institution with various groups. The CDO was widely praised by faculty and staff for the important training opportunities provided. Furthermore, the CDO is an integral member of the President’s Cabinet, as this is an intentional signal to the university of the criticality of diversity and its impact on all. Other evidence pointing to SJSU’s ongoing and deep commitment to diversity are: a) the establishment of an ad hoc committee on faculty diversity; and b) the establishment of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Another significant development since the previous WSCUC

team visit is that both the African American and the Chicanx/Latinx Student Success Task Forces have transitioned to baseline funding in Student Affairs. The administration is to be commended for its demonstrated commitment to diversity issues at SJSU (CFR 1.4).

Suggestions:

SJSU consider the development of an overall plan to coordinate the alignment, measurement, and assessment of all co-curricular and diversity training initiatives as they impact student success.

SJSU should align the 4 Pillars activities with other efforts related to student engagement in Student Affairs, the African American/Black and Chicanx/Latinx Student Success Centers, the UndocuSpartan Program, and Student Resource Centers.

Commendations:

SJSU is to be commended for its commitment towards promoting student success among its underrepresented minority (URM) student population, as demonstrated both by its baseline funding of the African American/Black Student and Chicanx/Latinx Student Success Centers, as well as by its creation of the 4 Pillars initiative.

SJSU is to be commended for its hiring of the university's first chief diversity officer; the establishment of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; as well as the extensive diversity training opportunities provided to faculty, staff, and students.

Recommendations:

SJSU should continue its excellent work in elevating student success, with a particular focus on strengthening Student Affairs, which will lead to a stronger university (CFRs 2.10, 4.3).

SJSU administration must take proactive steps to address issues relevant to staff communication, quality of worklife, and campus climate concerns (CFRs 3.2, 3.3).

SJSU systematically re-examine the role of professional academic advising to ensure sufficient staffing, training, and cultural competencies to serve URM, first generation college, student veterans, students with disabilities, and other student groups (CFRs 2.12, 2.13, and 2.14).

SJSU pay closer attention to academic advising to ensure that all students have adequate access to degree planning and degree program requirements (CFRs 2.12, 2.13, and 2.14).

SJSU deepen its effort to recruit, hire and retain faculty who reflect the diversity of the SJSU student community (CFRs 1.4, 3.1).

SECTION III - FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TEAM REVIEW

Commendations

1. SJSU administration is to be commended for its positive momentum in regards to shared governance, as it has demonstrated strong engagement and widespread consultation with faculty in decision-making.
2. SJSU is to be commended for its efforts towards promoting inclusiveness in its strategic planning efforts.
3. SJSU is to be commended for its commitment towards promoting student success among its underrepresented minority (URM) student population, as demonstrated both by its baseline funding of the African American/Black Student and Chicax/Latinx Student Success Centers, as well as by its creation of the 4 Pillars initiative.
4. SJSU is to be commended for its hiring of the university's first chief diversity officer; the establishment of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; as well as the extensive diversity training opportunities provided to faculty, staff, and students.

Recommendations

The evaluation team recommends that:

1. SJSU continue its excellent work in elevating student success, with a particular focus on strengthening Student Affairs, which will lead to a stronger university (CFRs 2.10, 4.3).
2. SJSU administration must take proactive steps to address issues relevant to staff communication, quality of worklife, and campus climate concerns (CFRs 3.2, 3.3).
3. SJSU systematically re-examine the role of professional academic advising to ensure sufficient staffing, training, and cultural competencies to serve URM, first

generation college, student veterans, students with disabilities, and other student groups (CFRs 2.12, 2.13, 2.14).

4. SJSU pay closer attention to academic advising to ensure that all students have adequate access to degree planning and degree program requirements (CFRs 2.12, 2.13, 2.14).

5. SJSU deepen its effort to recruit, hire and retain faculty who reflect the diversity of the SJSU student community (CFRs 1.4, 3.1).