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Academic Affairs Division Newsletter: A Fond Farewell to Provost Junn, January 2014

San Jose State University

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It's hard to believe it has been only two years since I began my chapter here at San José State University. The time seems so short, but together, we in Academic Affairs have accomplished a great deal in that span of time.

We chose and adopted [Canvas](#), our new learning management system. It was more affordable and more robust than previous systems and continues to grow and evolve to match our needs, as well as to provide opportunities for change. It has been gratifying to hear positive comments from faculty and students who have used this new system.



We developed an [Academic Plan](#) to guide the university.

We began the [WASC Accreditation](#) self-report process led by our outstanding faculty members [Kathleen Roe](#) and then [Camille Johnson](#).

We have strengthened our support for technology by hiring [Catheryn Cheal](#) as AVP and Senior Technology Advisor for Academic Technology.

We held [forums](#), lots of forums, on the budget, Town Hall meetings, the academic plan, and searched for better communication and sharing of information

We hired a new dean for the College of Humanities and the Arts, [Lisa Vollendorf](#), and a new dean for the College of Engineering, [Andrew Hsu](#).



Deans Lisa Vollendorf and Andrew Hsu

We continued the provost's [University Scholars Series](#) and were inspired by our talented faculty.

We held two [Celebrations of Research](#), expanded RSCA (Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity) funds, and are extremely proud of our faculty who have achieved recognition for their scholarship and creative activity.

We held two [SJSU Annual Author Awards](#), that revealed that our campus faculty have produced over 70 books in the last 3 years. What an impressive group of authors!

We invited Drs. Nancy Marlin and Geoff Chase from San Diego State to come speak on Student Success, Dr. Vincent Tinto, and Dr. Tom Ehrlich, who spoke about student engagement and high-impact practices. These speakers helped enrich our campus' knowledge and awareness of best practices designed to improve student success, and we are now implementing many of these ideas.



We hired a fabulous deputy provost, [Andy Feinstein](#), who will now ably lead the campus as our Interim Provost.

We celebrated the [10th Anniversary of the Martin Luther King Jr. library](#), and enjoyed opening the time capsule and remembering our prior history.

We have launched a new Undergraduate Research Initiative that permits students to work directly with faculty in scholarly and creative activities. Furthermore, we made new funds available for faculty and departments to engage in innovations in either teaching or technology to improve student learning.

Our [Center for Faculty Development](#) started a series of Faculty Learning Communities, the popular [Breakfast Club and Tea & Talk programs](#), and just completed a one-day Teaching and Learning conference, “High Tech, High Touch.”



We worked hard to increase Student Success and Graduation and Retention Rates (read the latest [Graduation and Retention Initiative Report here](#) (PDF)). For example, in Spring 2013, we created an African-American Student Success Task Force and a Hispanic Student Success Task Force. The faculty, staff, and student coordinators for both groups have been meeting bi-weekly and have already initiated several promising interventions to improve student success.

Academic Affairs Division initiated two new leadership opportunities last year. We created and appointed two Academic Affairs Administrative Fellows -- one for the [Academic Plan](#) (Lynne Trulio) and one for the Academic Affairs Faculty and Staff Leadership Discovery Group (AALDG, Annette Nellon). As a result of the AALDG, 80 faculty and staff members participated in this very engaging new program.



The [Academic Affairs Division Staff Appreciation Breakfast](#) that was held on November 1st was a huge success! Once again, the College of Social Sciences dominated the food drive competition. They will be treated to an informal award presentation and Interim Provost Andy Feinstein will donate half a day of volunteering on tasks assigned by the CoSS staff. A huge thank you to the event planning committee (Lauren Andersen, Molly Crowe,

Kim Huynh, Jessica Larsen, Sanela Latic, and Alma Livingston), as well as to all the wonderful staff who make up our division! Photos from the event will be posted to the [event website](#) soon.

We did all of this together, combining our principles, interests and energies.

Perhaps our boldest adventure was the partnering with [edX](#) and [Udacity](#). These opportunities were exciting and challenging, and helped put San José State into the national news arena. President Qayoumi and I were able to meet with Bill and Melinda Gates, Sebastian Thrun, the governor and lieutenant governor and other noted leaders. We also experienced the highs and lows of press coverage. All and all it was an invigorating experience and we learned a great deal. We were able to secure NSF funding to research the possibility of these new delivery methods and their applicability for under-prepared students still in high school and/or who already failed remedial math. The initial results were mixed, but it was one of the first empirical studies to determine student learning in actual university courses. In addition, our flipped classrooms using edX MOOC material produced significantly stronger student success. In sum, our own research report pointed out what has been supported by subsequent research -- online platforms work very well for students with access and familiarity with technology, who are motivated and typically more mature. In its current form, it perhaps was not the hoped-for panacea that politicians and entrepreneurs thought might solve the problems of access to quality education and lack of preparation for college level work. However, we are interested in continuing to learn more about the factors that help students achieve greater learning in online and blended classroom environments. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all faculty who were willing to innovate and to the other faculty who were actively interested in understanding and debating the merits of these new teaching methodologies. San José State is very fortunate to have such dedicated and thoughtful faculty who care deeply about our students.



UDACITY

We have lost a few treasured colleagues, some who have retired or relocated and some to the misty veil of time. All will be missed for their commitment to San José State University. Through it all, we have celebrated, commiserated and collaborated.



Mom, Sue, daughter, Anna, and Ellen

While it is sad to leave so many wonderful friends and colleagues, when my father passed away suddenly this fall, it became important for me to consider relocating closer to my family. Although I will be leaving San José State, I have cherished our time together, and in my heart I will always be a Spartan!

With admiration and affection,
Ellen Junn, your provost for a few more days.

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