New students open up about first year

By Olivia Gerber

As the fall semester comes to an end, freshmen and transfer students reflect on their first semester at San Jose State with remote learning.

“I was not expecting my first year of college, where people are supposed to make friends, learn life, mess up and try again [to be] like this,” saideronic science freshman Megan Ross. “We’re locked in our rooms or still back at home learning on a computer through Google and Zoom.”

Several aspects of campus life and athletics have been entirely shut down or reduced to accommodate the Santa Clara County health guidelines. According to the SJU% adapt plan for COVID-19, the residence halls are operating at 50-60% capacity with one resident per room.

Ross is a resident of Campus Village C and said living on campus has made her feel connected to her studies.

“I feel like definitely if I was back home my motivation would be even lower because here I have nothing to do except for school,” she said. Although this semester has not been the ideal environment to start fresh at SJU, new students are doing what they can to make friends and have as much of a college experience as possible.

Freshmen living off campus said they’re using social media, including the SAMMY app, to make friends, learn life, mess up and try again to be like this. [We’re] locked in our rooms or still back at home learning on a computer through Google and Zoom.

Megan Ross

Science-freshman

I was not expecting my first year of college, where people are supposed to make friends, learn life, mess up and try again to be like this. [We’re] locked in our rooms or still back at home learning on a computer through Google and Zoom.

First year

By Jovanna Olives

Current and prospective San Jose State students are reacting to new changes in admission standards caused by university impaction.

Impaction occurs when the university receives more qualified applicants than available space for incoming students. As a result, SJU has implemented revisions to its standards for Spring 2021, according to a Sept. 23 statement released by the Division of Student Affairs.

According to the statement on Freshman Impaction Results by the Majors, SJU began admitting Spring 2021 applicants in October.

A SJU% Recruitment Manager Colleen McLeroy said admitted freshmen and transfer students who applied for financial aid awards will be notified at the beginning of February.

With impaction during the pandemic, new changes and factors will be taken into consideration for the future admissions cycle process.

One important update is that SJU is not looking at SAT/ACT scores for Fall 2021 freshmen. According to the statement, San Jose State applied for and received an: [waiver of] ACT/SAT exams.

No one can know for sure if I will be able to have my freshman experience in college but I give the positives more importance.

Nishta Waland

Lower Lake High School senior

In September, the Academic Senate passed the Academic Senate bill (S) 20-4. Impaction occurs when the university receives more qualified applicants than available space for incoming students. As a result, SJU has implemented revisions to its standards for Spring 2021, according to a Sept. 23 statement released by the Division of Student Affairs. The statement on Freshman Impaction Results by the Majors explained that SJU began admitting Spring 2021 applicants in October. A SJU% Recruitment Manager Colleen McLeroy explained that admitted freshmen and transfer students who applied for financial aid awards will be notified at the beginning of February.

With impaction during the COVID-19 pandemic, new changes and factors will be taken into consideration for the future admissions cycle process.

One important update is that SJU is not looking at SAT/ACT scores for Fall 2021 freshmen. According to the statement, San Jose State applied for and received a waiver of SAT/ACT exams. The benefits of this change include: [waiver of] ACT/SAT exams.

Faculty union files petition

Instructors plead for student reviews to be excluded

By Andrea Belenicio

The California Faculty Association (CFA) is urging San Jose State’s president to reconsider extending the option for instructors to exclude Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 Student Opinion Teacher Evaluation Surveys (SOTES) from faculty evaluations through an online petition.

According to the CFA Collective Bargaining Agreement, instructors can submit and evaluate questionnaires at the end of each semester and can anonymously provide feedback about their instructor’s teaching. Responses are placed in the faculty’s Personnel Action File, which is used to assess performance, Retention, Tenure and Promotion (RTP).

“I want to hear what my students are saying and also will help me in the next semester, but at the same time evaluated based on these unusual circumstances, I think is not quite fair on the faculty,” Shamin Khan said over Zoom.

Khan is a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and Language Development and SJU’s CFA representative.

Khan said students may feel frustrated with this semester’s online classes and can use SOTES to express their opinions.

“It’s very stressful for students, we understand,” she said. “It’s also very stressful for faculty, because we’re being forced to teach in a way, and this is not anyone’s fault, this is because of the health situation, we are being forced to teach in a way that we’re not very comfortable doing.”

Previously approved policy vetoed

In March, SJU President Mary Papazian approved an Academic Senate bill (S) 20-4 to extend faculty members’ options to exclude student feedback from SOTES for the Spring 2020 semester. Papazian rationalized the decision by saying that because of the pandemic, faculty members were adjusting to new teaching modalities, according to the Academic Senate’s May 20-4 petition.

“Faculty members may fear that the changes will negatively impact their annual tenure and promotion reviews,” Papazian said. “This policy seeks to allow faculty to concentrate on course conversion and supporting their students unabashedly by that particular fear.”

Vincent Del Castro Jr., SJU provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, said in an Aug. 10 letter to faculty and deans that it is unknown how long the pandemic will last, adding that “the effect impacts faculty research and teaching.”

In the letter, he listed guidance that review committees should consider for future faculty evaluations.

“Evaluation of online instructors is based on the entire [SOTES] and the different results from their evaluations. However, Papazian vetoed the instructors’ new option based on the university’s interpretation of the petition. According to Academic Senate documents, SJU political science lecturer Robert Drotz said the university’s interpretation of the petition is still unclear.

“Many faculty are under a lot of stress having to teach in these conditions. There are also a lot of stress having to learn how to do it,” he said over the phone.

In September, many faculty members are experiencing online teaching on a scale that some of them have never had to deal with before.

He said this puts pressure on lecturers like him, who are on one-year tenures or contracts with the university because SOTES play an important role in tenure and promotion.
Editor's note: The Spartan Daily will resume publication on Jan. 27, 2021.

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SOTES big key role in role in contract renewal.

SOTES [excluding SOTES from faculty’s evaluation] would not be easily adjustable, to take those scores into account,” he said.

Student opinion concern

The university provided a detailed document on background information about student evaluations, but didn’t provide much further feedback.

However, Khan, who also represents the College of Humanities and Arts at the Academic Senate at SJSU, would like to see more discussion on the reasoning behind the decision was that students’ voices were not heard and the resolution would reflect their opinions.

Sang K. J熹ce studies professor and president of CFA Anti-Racism, a local [unrealistic] for students who were in the Spring 2020 class and Fall 2021 class.

“That’s not ignoring student opinion,” said Khan.

The university has been finding flexibility about what [excluding SOTES from faculty’s evaluation] to count towards what contributes to career or not. “But it isn’t that way,” she said, adding instructors just want the option.

Continued from page 1

real good time,” she said. “Sometimes I can’t help but get choked up and think about everything we’ve been through.”

Most classes this semester have been offered online. “We put a lot of that stuff, “ she said.

Khan said about 300 students were absent for the training. “It was a hard job,” said Waland.

The California State University system suspended the use of standardized test scores as an eligibility measure for all CSU campuses for the Fall 2021, Winter 2022 and Spring 2022 admission cycles, according to its website.

According to CSU eligibility requirements, students may submit unconverted ACT or SAT scores in their application.

The University of California system is one of the few universities that use SOTES to evaluate faculty, according to committee chair and professor of education James Lee, the SJSU senior director of faculty development.

“Because (faculty) might feel nice there could be retaliation,” said Kil.

Follow Jovanna on Twitter @joo_zuniga

First Year

Continued from page 1

I think if I had a better grasp on the resources that the school could provide and maybe if I knew more peers in my classes it would have been nice but because I really don’t it hasn’t been hard.

Dru Coronado, psychology transfer

Admissions

Continued from page 1

ambassador for the Student Outreach and Recruitment office.

Spring 2021 admission cycle, according to its website.

According to CSU eligibility requirements, students may submit converted SAT or ACT scores in their application. Acceptance and scores would be used by faculty members to make decisions, which not all faculty went for, and nor do they have to, absolutely was not appropriate for the rest of the teaching.

The maximum amount is a dollar amount.

For course placement purposes but acceptance and scores would be used for course placement purposes but.

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Has tech made the pandemic better?

Yes, technology is making life more convenient

Shiri Marwaha

At no point in human history would life under lockdown be as comfortable as this year’s global coronavirus pandemic because of technological progress and advancements.

People are now connected online to the world in every way possible while social-distancing.

According to a March 23 article from the Cato Institute, a public policy research organization, social distancing without current technology would have meant complete isolation for previous generations.

Technology has made social distancing bearable with online communication.

People can now work from home, attend doctor appointments and socialize all through the comfort of their own homes.

Society wouldn’t have been this fortunate before the invention of computers and the internet.

Students have continued to receive education through remote learning and although it’s not comparable to in-person education, the internet has prevented learning gaps.

Students would have been without education for months if not for technology.

Not only has work and school been made more accessible, but also medical care.

Doctor appointments through Zoom and other telemedicine providers have helped patients with pre-existing conditions and other ailments continue to see their health care professionals, without risking coronavirus contraction.

Patients now have the technology to communicate their symptoms to doctors online, helping them get diagnosed and receive prescriptions from the safety of their home.

According to a March 11 New York Times article, patients are able to receive guidance on coronavirus testing using their phone or computer.

Those who are immunocompromised and at high risk for COVID-19 can substitute a trip to the doctor’s office with an online visit via TV, fitness apps and websites like YouTube.

According to an article on the University of Michigan’s medical center website, regular physical activity is shown to boost and strengthen the immune system along with reducing substance abuse.

People can still maintain good health and exercise with the use of technology.

We can also check on our loved ones and help present depressive thoughts and symptoms.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us in many ways, but technology has been a great help for people to have a sense of normality through such a stressful situation.

Technology has made social distancing bearable with online communication.

People can now attend work, school, doctor appointments and socialize all through the comfort of their own home.

Olivia Gerber

In the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, technology has been the glue holding society together, but without repercussions.

Technology has allowed people to stay connected with family and friends, as well as work from home. However, online communication can be harmful and not equipped to in-person contact.

Spending all day on a computer or phone is damaging to a person’s quality of life.

The rise in internet activity has made users of online platforms targets for criminal activity or harassment and the increased accessibility that technology creates makes it hard to disconnect from work or school.

The technologically dependent environment students and employees now operate in causes a phenomenon called “technostress.”

According to a 2013 peer-reviewed article from the International Research Journals, technostress is “a modern disease of the digital age.”

A large part of the population is experiencing a stressful transition after being forced to learn how to use Zoom to carry on with their lives.

What was once a simple in-person task now takes several steps to complete normally.

A teacher cannot simply walk up to help a struggling student or write out problems on a whiteboard.

Now they have to learn to operate Zoom in lieu and replicate the functionality of a classroom.

The constant scrutiny and demanding nature that technology allows is unnerving for users.

In a June 9 article from the National Center for Biotechnology Information, technostress is also caused by employees having to be available at all times, constantly leapfrogging digital devices around and coping with stressful multitasking.

The constant focus on a smartphone is exhausting and strips away at employment who are always anticipating emails or messages from supervisors who now have direct access to workers at all times thanks to technology.

A substantial amount of people have needed to increase their online presence which has opened the door for criminal activity and harassment.

According to the same National Center for Biotechnology Information article, many users are beginning to study extensively on digital resources for the first time and are now targets for timewaste and scams.

The article explains how the pandemic created an unsafe scenario for internet users that has invited fraudsters to exploit the crisis situation by extracting money or information through online means.

It is not limited to scams and fraud.

The vulnerability of video meetings like Zoom calls have been infiltrated by unintentional guests who haunt hosts and attendees, sometimes with traumatizing content.

According to a June 10 article from Vice, “Zoom Bombing” has increased just as the amount of Zoom users have increased.

The same article said incidents range from seemingly harmless disruptions, including celebrities appearing in college classes, to more disturbing alterations like anti-Semitic groups who infiltrated an online Holocaust memorial and broadcasted images of Auschwitz.

The rise in internet activity has made users of online platforms targets for criminal activity or harassment and the increased accessibility that technology creates makes it hard to disconnect from work or school.

Although technology has given people the ability to connect, it has allowed people with malicious intentions to troll others online.

Technology has allowed students and workers to continue on with their jobs and school work but has also made them vulnerable to harassment.

Many people have discovered the harsh reality of how extracting a constant virtual presence can be for both physical and mental health.

Follow Shiri on Twitter @MarwahaShiri

Follow Olivia on Twitter @LivGerber

Have a story idea?
Contact us at spartandaily@gmail.com.
By Samantha Herrera

San Jose State football head coach Brent Brennan is more than a coach to his players; he’s a father figure for their brotherhood. “He treats everybody like we’re his family, like his actual relatives,” senior linebacker, Tyrin Turner said over Zoom.

A San Jose native himself, Brennan is in his fourth season as head coach of the football team. He began coaching football at SJU in 2005 and stayed until 2010 as an assistant coach under Dick Tomey and Mike MacIntyre. Brennan coached receivers at Oregon State starting in 2011 before returning to SJU as Def. at head coach, according to the SJU Athletics website.

Brennan said it’s exciting to go through new challenges with a team he hasn’t experienced before. “I’m still in the early stages of [coaching] and I think, as you know there’s no manual for this,” Brennan said in a Nov. 14 postgame Zoom conference.

“He knows you’re living every day, it’s really special,” said Burrill over Zoom. “He’s this huge presence [and] you know he’s got your back, so that’s been super important to us."

Burrill said Brennan has made sure the team has help from campus advisors throughout their college career. “This would not only support players in the academic process and help advisors were serving players into the future,” Burrill said.

“He makes academics a very high priority on his list and he really cares about our academics and making us graduate,” Burrill said.

Burrill said Brennan makes sure the team has help from campus advisors throughout their college career. “This would not only support players in the academic process and help advisors were serving players into the future, but that of the coaches work throughout his time at SJSU.”

One of the biggest challenges COVID-19 brought to the team was months of remote training in spring and summer. Burrill said that didn’t stop team bonding from being Brennan’s priority. “He made sure every month we were doing remote training and for the rest of us,” Parker said. “I wish for nothing more than the best for him, and I hope the cycle keeps going and the Spartans keep doing well and he’s doing well.”

Burrill said Brennan hasn’t just made the team better football players but better men overall. “We just appreciate everything he’s done and being [as] devoted to the process and just making our guys better men not just better players,” Parker said.

Follow Samantha on Twitter @sammiherreraa_
Local holiday tradition lives on

By Laura Fields

Cheerful holiday music and dazzling hues of red and green were skillfully combined to create a musical Christmas experience like San Jose has never seen before.

Christmas in the Park, Downtown San Jose’s annual Christmas display of lights, trees and exhibits, has been reinvented this year to adhere to local coronavirus mandates. The festive holiday tradition changed from its downtown location to a drive-through attraction at History Park on Senter Road.

Jason Minsky, the executive director of Christmas In the Park, said the decision to change locations was based on restructuring the event from its pre-pandemic walking experience into an attraction patrons can view from their cars.

"[History Park] lends itself very well to a drive-through," he said. "It has paved roads [and] it’s very scenic. Kind of like Main Street USA itself, with lampposts and historic buildings."

Minsky said many people believe Christmas in the Park is still organized by the City of San Jose, but the festivities are currently run by volunteers from a nonprofit organization under the same name, after the city could no longer afford the event in 2012.

The event previously held at Plaza De César Chavez was free, but this year’s ticket prices are $20 dollars per car. The nonprofit made this change to substitute for the money it typically made at concessions, rides and vendors, which will not be included.

Because of COVID, we had to pivot," Minsky told the Sentinel. "The only way we could do an event this year and successfully do an event in the future is to charge. There was just no way around, not charging for the event."

He said the large parking lot at History Park is beneficial for line control, giving event coordinators a place where cars can wait before entering the event as well as avoid creating traffic on Senter Road.

There were both positive and negative aspects that accumulated in the reimagining of Christmas in the Park.

The event guides the long line of cars through History Park’s graciously large parking lots.

Arriving 15 to 20 minutes before the scheduled arrival time is ideal if visitors wish to enter the drive-through light display on-time.

As cars approach the entrance of the event, staff in light-up jackets scan tickets through the car window to maintain social-distancing. Visitors are encouraged to tune into the radio station 101.3FM through signs decorated with dancing elves that accompany the dancing lights.

The music lent itself well to the colors and flashing lights, with blue hues for the song, “Into the Unknown” from the Disney movie Frozen. Festive reds and greens mirror the melody of Mariah Carey’s “All I Want For Christmas.”

Cheerful holiday music and dazzling hues of red and green were skillfully combined to create a musical Christmas experience like San Jose has never seen before.

Christmas in the Park maintains its charm and delivers a much-needed dose of Christmas cheer this holiday season amid the pandemic.

Follow Laura on Instagram @lauranicolepie

Bottom: An animatronic band plays music for the holiday festivities.

Top: Cars drive through holiday-colored light archways on Monday.

Middle: Santa overlooks Christmas in the Park visitors from his sleigh.

César Chávez was free, but this year’s ticket prices are $20 dollars per car. The nonprofit made this change to substitute for the money it typically made at concessions, rides and vendors, which will not be included.

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