

Our Legacy. Our Promise

Inaugural Address

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President, San José State University
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Chancellor White, Trustees Farar, Norton, Stepanik, Reyes Salinas and White Mayor Liccardo, Supervisor Chavez, distinguished clergy and community representatives, colleagues and friends,

It is with enormous gratitude and deep humility that I embrace this opportunity to lead this storied institution.

Responsibility for a public university—this university—is a sacred trust.

The president ultimately is responsible for the welfare of every student and of the faculty and staff members who serve and support them.

As the founding campus of the California State University and the only public university located in the Silicon Valley—the world’s epicenter of innovation—San Jose State also is a vital intellectual, cultural and economic asset and an essential community partner to our city and broader region.

The Board of Trustees, the Chancellor, and all of you, have placed enormous trust in me. And I am determined not to let you down.

This morning’s investiture ceremony—the cloaking of a new leader in garments symbolic of the office—is as sacred as the institution itself.

The ceremony dates back to a Middle Ages religious custom and academic tradition.

And the term “investiture” is derived from the Latin investire, meaning to “clothe” or “cover.” The robes and accompanying garments you see today only occasionally are worn, the opportunity to

But this also is our day. Our collective opportunity to celebrate the remarkable legacy of the West’s first public university.

And to imagine the future of what can—and will—be America's premier urban public university

This, my friends, is our day to reintroduce this proud 160-year old institution to the world.

Over the next few minutes, I hope to do exactly that, while also answering a couple of fundamental questions

At that time, Dennis was an established, esteemed faculty member at the University of Michigan, Dearborn, a noted

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A special welcome to Rector Ruben Mirzakhanyan from the Armenian State Pedagogical University who has travelled from Yerevan, Armenia to be with us to the Hon. Berj Apkarian, Honorary Consul for the Republic of Armenia

And to Professor Paul Sellin, a longtime professor of English at UCLA and an incredible scholar and teacher who first introduced me to Donne and Milton a lifetime ago, and who served as my mentor and dissertation advisor. My academic career would not have been possible without your guidance and friendship.

Thank you all for sharing this special day with us!

I also would like to extend a special thank you to my colleagues who have joined me on stage and offered kind words and reminiscences.

To Millie Garcia, whom I first met in New York and New Jersey (and who is convinced that I am a New Yorker) and whose passion for our mission and the importance of opportunity all continues to inspire me.

To Lynn Pasquella, who has traveled from Washington, D.C. to share this day with us, your commitment to the liberal arts and learning, to mentorship and opportunity.

We spawned

The Renaissance period, which encompassed Donne's life, bridged the Middle Ages to the modern age. It was a period of awakening.

What happened in the Renaissance changed the course of history—the understandings that made possible the modern world emerged—in learning, the geography, science, astronomy, medicine, literature, theater and much more.

It was during this period that man's understanding of the universe vastly expanded. The "educated person" rose in stature.

The Scientific Method—the process by which knowledge is discovered and validated—developed and defined

The movable type printing press was invented, facilitating the systematic spread of the printed word and, in the 1400s, the Gutenberg Bible came off the press—the first mass-produced book in human history

Printed music also became available for the first time on a mass scale, so that music itself could develop in new ways.

The Renaissance triggered the democratization of knowledge, making information available in mass quantities on a scale never before encountered

What has the Renaissance period to do with early 21st-century society, or Silicon Valley, or the future direction of a public institution like ours?

Plenty.

The Renaissance was a transformative moment in human history. And we now are in the midst of another period of transformative change.

Columnist and author Thomas Friedman in his new book, *Thank You for Being Late*, calls the present day "...one of the greatest inflection points in history."

Friedman's premise is that the greatest forces around us—technology, globalization and climate change—simultaneously are accelerating. For [(s)-5 (i)-6 -2 (as)-5 ()-10 (a)]T (oJ 4.57 0 2 ((no) 04002 T2

There, as here, women

So rather than pursue her doctoral degree, my mom earned a teaching credential. And once my youngest brother started elementary school in the late 60s, she went to teach at the local Armenian high school that had opened in 1965.

This was the first Armenian high school in America. My brothers and I all went there, and my mother taught there for 30 years. We lived next door to the principal and founder of the school; this was very much a community and family affair.

My mother taught English and American history, and actually all history, but English was her first love. She was a fan of the British poet Lord Byron, who himself learned Armenian while living in an Armenian monastery on the island of San Lazzaro just off the coast of Venice, Italy.

My mother was that teacher—every school seemed to have at least one—who challenged her students and truly prepared them for college. Every one of her students would say that college was easier because of how well she prepared them.

She had them writing essays, reading, developing their study skills. She was renowned for the notes that her students had to take and also for her exams.

No multiple-choice tests for her students; you had to be able to think and write. Her students later said that the discipline on which she insisted was life-changing.

My mother didn't care if you were an

First, let me be clear. We did not need an investiture ceremony and you did not need a new president—to reaffirm an essential truth: San Jose State University is an extraordinary institution.

Yet its greatness is revealed not through any of historical facts.

In New Haven, I led a public university that for a very long time sat in the shadow of an elite League university. I believe you've heard of its name rhymes with "Whale."

Perseverance, self-confidence and sheer effort put Southern Connecticut State University on the map. Its impact throughout the region has steadily and measurably increased.

San Jose State is vital to this city's intellectual, cultural and economic vitality. We are essential to this region's prosperity and quality of life.

Evidence of this is all around us. This includes our alumni—now more than a quarter-million strong, a majority of whom live in the immediate Bay Area.

It includes the forty thousand students and employees who visit this campus every weekday.

It includes the countless visitors we attract year-round.

And it includes the many university-sponsored programs and activities that bring you intellectual, cultural, social and economic diversity to our city and region.

Ours is a great university sitting in the heart of a great city. Together, our capacity to do great things is limitless.

We know some of what lies ahead. We will build a new science and innovation complex, opening doors to academic and research partnerships.

We will expand and renovate spaces here and on our south campus.

We will seek opportunities to expand further our footprint beyond our present borders and into the city.

We will collaborate in producing a long-term strategic plan to inform and guide our decision-2 (u <</MCID

We are the inheritors of a grand, 160 year old legacy. And while the work ahead may at times seem daunting, before us sit limitless possibilities.

The future is ours. Let's go for it! It's time to get started!

Thank you!