

20-21/03

SJSU Student Demands During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Whereas, There is a strong, ongoing need to accommodate for students, many of whom have or are experiencing hardships that include, but are not limited to stress, anxiety, depression, other mental health issues, unexpected disruptions in work schedules, financial difficulties, shifts in housing and study environments, and the ability to access adequate or regular computer equipment or internet service; and

Whereas, The Economic Policy Institute indicates that “the pandemic has exacerbated well-documented opportunity gaps that put low-income students at a disadvantage relative to their better-off peers. Opportunity gaps are gaps in access to the conditions and resources that enhance learning and development, and include access to food and nutrition, housing, health insurance and care, and financial relief measures”⁶; and

Whereas, The Chronicle of Higher Education, highlights a survey with more than 22,500 undergraduate students at five public research universities whose results state, “76 percent said they lacked motivation for online learning...from burnout, distraction, worry, and uncertainty”⁷; and

Whereas, A study of student basic needs indicates that a significant portion of CSU students had already faced food insecurity, homelessness, and barriers to accessing mental health counseling, with the pandemic exacerbating such struggles⁸; and

Whereas, A COVID-19 and Mental Health survey commissioned by Chegg.org, found that a quarter of students (23% college, 24% high school) know of someone who has had suicidal thoughts since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Five percent of US college and high school students surveyed also report having made a suicide attempt themselves during the pandemic⁹; and

⁶ Economic Policy Institute- “COVID-19 and student performance, equity, and U.S. education policy” <https://www.epi.org/publication/the-consequences-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-for-education-performance-and-equity-in-the-united-states-what-can-we-learn-from-pre-pandemic-research-to-inform-relief-recovery-and-rebuilding/>

⁷ The Chronicle of Higher Education- “The New Rules of Engagement” https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-new-rules-of-engagement?bc_nonce=e9ch467q2a7eop7q0dmqwo&cid=reg_wall_signup

⁸ The California State University, Basic Needs Initiative- Study of Student Basic Needs https://www2.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/student-success/basic-needs-initiative/Documents/BasicNeedsStudy_phaseII_withAccessibilityComments.pdf

⁹ Businesswire- “Nearly a Quarter of US College and High School Students Know Someone Who Has Had Suicidal Thoughts During Covid-19 Pandemic, According to New Chegg Surveys” <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200910005349/en/Nearly-a-Quarter-of-US-College-and-High-School-Students-Know-Someone-Who-Has-Had-Suicidal-Thoughts-During-Covid-19-Pandemic-According-to-New-Chegg-Survey>

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Whereas, the same source states that another key finding of the Chegg survey is, “1 in 5 college students have experienced more financial pressure since the pandemic started”⁹; and

Whereas, The conditions and impacts of COVID-19 change immensely day to day, with significantly different circumstances from Fall 2020 to Spring 2020. This includes, but is not limited to, facing a global pandemic and the fear of contracting COVID-19, the loss of loved ones, the ongoing troubleshooting due to a remote learning environment, being physically and socially isolated, civil unrest due to police brutality and systemic racism, threats to international students, women’s rights being up for question, wildfires throughout California, power shutdowns, and a presidential election; and

Whereas, the repercussions of such circumstances are not within a student’s control and therefore they should not be penalized due to the ongoing public health crisis, and the inequities and disparities that are exacerbated by the pandemic socially, economically and politically; and

Whereas, San José State conducted a Student Success Survey in Spring 2020, and among their key findings found that, “nearly one-third (30%) of undergraduate students, and 20% of graduate students report that they do not have regular access to an appropriate space for studying and completing coursework”¹⁰; and

Whereas, the same source among their key findings regarding academic success found that, “more than half (57%) of undergraduate students and 42% of graduate students reported that stress and anxiety had impacted their academic success ‘a lot’ in Spring 2020” and “significant numbers of students reported that family responsibilities, work responsibilities, physical health, and other issues impacted their academic success in Spring 2020”¹⁰; and

Whereas, the same source asked questions regarding plans for Fall 2020 and found that, “among students planning to continue in Fall 2020, and those not sure if they would continue, the top three concerns were online courses, academics, and finances”¹⁰; and

Whereas, The California State Student Association (CSSA) passed a resolution entitled “Alternative Grading Resolution” which was approved by the body with a majority vote. Where among the 23 CSU campuses, many have modified or are in the process of modifying their University policies to offer maximum flexibility and compassion when it comes to addressing student needs; and

¹⁰ SJSU, Institutional Research- “SJSU Spring 2020 Student Success Summary Report”
http://ir.sjsu.edu/Surveys/Surveys/student_success_2020//index.php?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiWXPBeE1EYzBZVEZrWXP

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Whereas, Offering a flexible grading consideration like Credit/No Credit alleviates a key burden on students during these unprecedented stressful times, allows them to focus on learning, and gives them a choice to meet their individual needs and struggles; and

Whereas, San José State University must inclusively meet the needs of all students to advocate for educational equity and facilitate students' success in their coursework by thoughtfully modifying their policies; therefore, be it

Resolved, That San José State University extends similar guidance as provided in Spring 2020 on options for grading flexibility in campus grading systems as long as the pandemic and the effects felt from the pandemic are ongoing in terms of remote instruction, within the constraints of Executive Orders and the Title 5 Administrative Code of California; and further be it

Resolved, That San José State University offers opt-in Credit/No Credit with an extended deadline to allow students the choice between CR/NC and a letter grade; and further be it

Resolved, That there be a transcript notation for the Fall 2020, Winter 2020, Spring 2021, and Summer 2021 semesters specifying that COVID-19 pandemic was taking place; and further be it

Resolved, That academic disqualification be suspended for as long as the pandemic and the effects felt from the pandemic are ongoing; and further be it

Resolved, That there be further flexibility surrounding the add and drop dates for courses for future semesters; and further be it

Resolved, That there be additional language to the syllabus template informing students about the COVID-19 modifications as it relates to their academic career and on-

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Resolved, That San José State Students would be recommended to consult with their advisors and/or department chairs thoughtfully and carefully when making any decisions on grading option changes to identify potential benefits and risks when it comes to their unique academic careers and learn about campus resources that can support their cumulative experience; and further be it

Resolved, That there be additional support for the Office of the Registrar and Student Success Centers to address the increased workload; and let it be finally

Resolved, That Associated Students will make this document public and will forward this resolution to the following parties, including, but not limited to: President Papazian, members of

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