

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM SPECIAL VISIT

To San José State University

April 8 – 11, 2025

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2023 Handbook and 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

A. Description of the Institution, its Accreditation History, as Relevant, and the Visit

The oldest state university in California, San José State University (hereafter referred to as SJSU) is a downtown campus nestled in the Silicon Valley, one of the most expensive locations in the United States for cost-of-living. The institution was founded as a public school to train teachers and has transformed over the past century and a half to be a large comprehensive university that is part of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system. The institution is situated on 187.2 acres of land across three campuses (Main, South, and Moss Landing Marine Laboratories). In fall 2024, SJSU enrolled 37,307 students, including 9,299 graduate students across 153 baccalaureate programs, 100 master's programs, and 5 professional doctorates.

First accredited in 1949, SJSU received a seven-year reaffirmation in 2015. The 2015 Commission Action Letter (CAL) called for a Special Visit (SV) in 2017 to monitor progress with respect to: 1) leadership, organizational climate, and shared governance; and 2) campus climate. The current review cycle began with an Offsite Review (OSR) in fall 2021 to prepare for the spring 2022 on-site Accreditation Visit (AV). After the OSR, the review team requested and received additional documents and determined that deeper analysis should focus on transparency, communication and climate, and capacity. As the AV approached there were significant changes in leadership at the highest levels of SJSU and the CSU system. In 2022, following the AV, the Commission reaffirmed SJSU accreditation for six years and called for an SV in spring 2025 to review SJSU's responses to nine specific issue areas identified in the 2022 CAL. Three of the five 2022 AV team members comprise the 2025 SV team. SJSU provided the SV team a comprehensive report addressing the nine issue areas, and the SV team requested some additional information, which was provided prior to the SV.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The Special Visit team was comprised of a majority of members from the 2022 reaffirmation visit. The team's review process began with the review of the institutional report and appended documents that were uploaded to the institution's Box account as well as the Student Outcomes Overview from the Key Indicators Dashboard, the institution's website, and the CSU system's student success dashboard. Since this visit was a special visit, the team reviewed the recommendations from the Commission Action Letter (CAL), and team members were given primary writing assignments that most closely reflected their assignments during the reaffirmation visit. After the team met in a virtual conference call, it requested additional documents from the institution, which were then uploaded to Box.

The chair met with the president of SJSU as well as the chancellor of the CSU prior to the visit. Additionally, one of the team members visited Moss Landing Marine Laboratories on April 7 to review progress on recommendations from the previous CAL. During the visit on April 9 – 10, the team met with system leaders, SJSU administration, staff, faculty, and student representatives to learn more about the institutional response to the Commission's recommendations. During the open period, the assistant chair also closely monitored the confidential email account and shared out with the rest of the team. The visit concluded on Friday April 11, 2025 with a meeting between the chair and SJSU's president followed by a public exit meeting during which the team chair read the team's commendations and recommendations to those attending.

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

SJSU submitted a well-organized, well-written, and forthright self-reflection of all the actionable items from the 2023 Commission Action Letter (CAL). The institution has a standing

Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) that coordinates with appropriate stakeholders in gathering evidence and crafting the report. As Appendix 0.5 noted, key stakeholders from the ARC were principal writers for sections related to their work, and drafts were shared out to the entire committee. The report reflected on a number of issues, however, the team noted that at times the report simply provided conclusions without showing how the conclusions aligned with evidence. Documents requested before and during the visit helped to substantiate the claims in the report. The institution could better incorporate evidence that support its primary claims into its narrative and accompanying documents. Nevertheless, SJSU has been actively making progress relative to the recommendations articulated in the CAL. In addition, during the visit, the team learned that there are overlapping interests and memberships across three primary committees. The team believes an opportunity exists to formalize collaboration and alignment between the Accreditation Review Committee, the Academic Planning Committee, and the Assessment Committee as SJSU continues with institution-wide initiatives and reporting (CFR 2.4, 3.10, 4.5, 4.8).

SECTION II – TEAMS’S EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

A. Issue 1: Campus Climate Assessment

Engage in a comprehensive assessment of campus climate and develop measurable goals for positive change. (2013 CFRs 2.8, 2.9, 3.1, 3.2, 4.4; 2023 CFRs 2.8, 3.1, 3.2, 4.5)

The institution has begun work to address longstanding issues surrounding campus climate. Since the 2022 AV, SJSU has established a framework for determining climate and sense of belonging on campus. Since then, the institution was part of a CSU system-wide review (the Cozen O’Connor Report) analyzing Title IX and Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation. SJSU followed up on a number of campus-specific recommendations contained in the report. In addition, it administered several surveys it developed locally and began a series of

initiatives and workgroups such as People-Centered Excellence and the Future of Humanity and Civic Engagement framework. As noted in the institutional report, while there have been a significant number of campus-climate activities, these activities sometimes have been siloed and have not necessarily resulted in institution-wide transformation. The Campus Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CCDEI) has provided a crucial role knitting these disparate activities together. During interviews, the team learned that this recommendation was difficult to address but also profoundly rewarding in that new institutional partnerships were built as they strategized how to design and implement measurable goals around climate. The report (p. 11) noted several campus climate issues, sample initiatives, and actionable goals that it plans to assess over the coming academic year. In addition, SJSU developed additional surveys and planned activities to provide a solid foundation for moving forward with future assessments.

The team believes that SJSU is making satisfactory progress on this issue and recommends that SJSU execute the planned comprehensive assessment of campus climate and act on the findings (CFR 3.2, 4.3).

B. Issue 2: Shared Governance

Improve shared governance to ensure consultation is inclusive of all stakeholders including faculty, staff, administration, and students. (2013 CFRs 3.1, 4.6; 2023 CFRs 3.1, 4.8)

The 2025 SV Report documents that, under the leadership of the new president, SJSU has strengthened several aspects of shared governance. First, after a year-long consultative process led by a newly formed Committee on Senate Representation and members of the Staff Council, the Academic Senate amended its Constitution and Bylaws in 2024-25 to expand staff membership on the Senate; the new members will be seated in 2025-26. Second, the President and members of her cabinet have established regular consultative meetings with faculty, staff, and student constituencies throughout SJSU to make leadership aware of stakeholder concerns

and priorities. Third, the president and her cabinet have regularly shared information about campus strategic priorities and budget planning with stakeholders and sought their advice and input on these matters. To this end, open “town hall” meetings are used to provide opportunities for engagement with the entire campus community.

During the SV, interviewees described concrete positive impacts of the above actions. For example: Senate consultation with the administration about proposed new policies is felt to be timelier. Staff express enthusiasm about their inclusion in the Academic Senate. Both the Staff Council and student government have been observed to bring forward potentially actionable proposals for consideration by the Academic Senate and administration. Transparency is leading stakeholders to be better informed on major issues, making committees and task forces more effective at dealing with challenging issues and making staff more aware of the strategic impact of their work.

During the SV, the team heard from various administrators, faculty, staff, and Academic Senate representatives that further clarification would be valuable in several topics related to shared governance, including:

- Where does decision authority lie for each of the major aspects of running the university (as opposed to the general need for all stakeholders to be consulted)?
- What is the appropriate balance between arenas where only one group of stakeholders is giving input (e.g., Staff Council) and those where all stakeholder groups are included (e.g., Academic Senate)?
- How will the membership of Academic Senate committees be adjusted to incorporate the new staff representatives?
- How will staff representatives be accorded time to participate in Academic Senate activities?
- How will the rights of staff representatives be safeguarded if they express unpopular opinions in Senate meetings?
- How will faculty workload be adjusted to facilitate participation in the new initiatives and shared governance opportunities?

The team believes that SJSU is making satisfactory progress on this issue and recommends that SJSU develop a common understanding of shared governance including the roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders (faculty, staff, administration, and students) (CFR 2.5, 2.6, 4.1)

C. Issue 3: CEO Recruitment / Retention

Recruit and retain a chief executive officer to provide effective leadership and promote and ensure stability. (2013 CFRs 3.6, 3.8; 2023 CFRs 3.9)

As noted in the 2022 report, the SJSU president with whom the team chair had communicated leading up to the visit had just resigned in the wake of Title IX issues. Similarly, the CSU Chancellor with whom the team chair had communicated leading up to the visit also resigned before the visit. Moreover, the team chair was unsuccessful in scheduling a meeting with board of trustee (board) leadership in 2022. These circumstances created significant concern within the team.

The team notes that the CSU system did recruit and hire a new campus CEO. The new president began her service president in January 2023, replacing the interim president who served during the 2022 calendar year. The new president has experience as a campus CEO in a large multi-campus public university system as well as significant prior experience as a senior executive in two other public university systems, including CSU. The team notes that, later in 2023, the CSU Board also hired a (non-interim) Chancellor for the system.

The SV team reviewed the 2025 SV Report provided by SJSU, which includes the clear agreement by the then-interim CSU chancellor and SJSU president on immediate priorities for the campus. In preparation for the SV, the team chair also met (electronically) with the SJSU president and new CSU chancellor, neither of whom were serving interim appointments.

Alignment seemed strong and clear. Based on the SV Institutional Report and approximately 20 meetings of the team on campus during the SV, it appears the president is providing effective and stable leadership for the campus.

The team believes this 2022 recommendation has been fully addressed.

D. Issue 4: CSU BOT Involvement

The CSU Board of trustees must exercise appropriate engagement with San José State University over institutional integrity, policies, stability of leadership, and accreditation. (2013 CFRs 3.9; 2023 CFRs 3.7)

As noted in the 2022 report, at the time of the AV the SJSU president with whom the team chair had communicated leading up to the visit had just resigned in the wake of Title IX issues. Similarly, the CSU chancellor with whom the team chair had communicated leading up to the AV also resigned before the visit. Additionally, the team chair was unsuccessful in scheduling a meeting with board of trustee (board) leadership. These circumstances created significant concern within the team, particularly as the board did not seem to appreciate its responsibilities at a time when there was interim senior leadership at both the SJSU campus and CSU system.

The SV team reviewed the SV Report provided by SJSU, which notes that since the new president was appointed, nine different CSU trustees have visited SJSU and two have visited the campus twice. The new president specifically noted that investments in her mentorship by the last two chancellors and now two board chairs have helped the campus move forward.

In preparation for the 2025 SV, the team chair also met virtually with the SJSU president and new CSU chancellor, neither of whom were serving interim appointments. Engagement of the CSU board around SJSU and its issues was one of the topics of that conversation. During the SV itself the full SV team participated in a virtual meeting with two CSU trustees and three CSU

system senior executives. Alignment and engagement of SJSU with the CSU system up to and including the board seemed appropriate and strong.

The team believes this 2022 recommendation has been fully addressed.

E. Issue 5: Narrowing Equity Gaps

Narrow equity gaps in achievement between URM/non-URM and Pell eligible/non-Pell eligible students. (2013 CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 4.1; 2023 CFRs 1.2, 2.10, 4.1)

Since the 2022 accreditation visit, the institution has made notable progress on its persistence and graduation rates across all demographics. The CSU Chancellor's Office set specific targets for all CSU campuses in its Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025), which SJSU has met. Its Fall 2024 to Spring 2025 persistence rate for all students was 92% and for first-time, first year (FTFY) students that number jumped to an impressive 96.1%. Overall campus improvement has made closing specific equity gaps even more of a challenge. To address those continuing gaps, the institution has identified and is taking specific steps from class-level through institutional-level activities, such as establishing inclusive pedagogy frameworks for faculty, encouraging faculty participation in the Chancellor's Office Data Analytics certificate program to better understand connections to success rates or major migration, and establishing faculty learning communities both within and between colleges to promote student success.

The team believes the institution is making satisfactory progress on its plans and progress in narrowing equity gaps and the team commends SJSU for its shared university-wide commitment to student success as demonstrated by improving student persistence and graduation rates.

F. Issue 6: DEI Integration

Integrate DEI and under-represented student success initiatives across the campus to promote equitable student outcomes. (2013 CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 4.1; 2023 CFRs 1.2, 2.10, 4.1)

Since the 2022 accreditation visit, the institution has worked collaboratively, creatively, and conscientiously to examine campus climate and set up a roadmap for the future. Just prior to the visit, the institution received the Resolution agreement from the Department of Justice ending federal monitoring of the institution after years-long Title IX issues. The institution provided evidence detailing the effective work of multiple offices and committees including the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI), the Campus Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CCDEI), and the Office of title IX and Equal Opportunity.

The institution also responded directly to the recommendation in the CAL first by realigning several offices into a larger umbrella unit entitled Student Equity and Belonging. This new unit consolidated resources to facilitate the integration of campus initiatives. Building on the realignment within Student Affairs, the institution also developed greater collaboration between the divisions and multiple campus offices. This collaboration has resulted in a strategic plan to develop metrics to measure the success of these initiatives. For example, these offices have developed metrics around belonging and are triangulating the data with NSSE results, focus groups, and task force findings. As the institution moves towards its next reaffirmation visit, these offices plan to develop additional metrics using the same model. The team was impressed with the work being done by various groups to ensure inclusive excellence across campus, both in promoting student success in persistence, retention, and graduation and in ensuring that SJSU is a place of belonging for all stakeholders.

The team believes the institution is making satisfactory progress on this issue and commends the institution for the development of measurable goals for positive change through integration of campuswide initiatives.

G. Issue 7: Learning Outcomes Integration

Integrate learning outcomes into a more strategic and inclusive planning process with leadership at all levels, faculty, staff, administration, curriculum committees and assessment coordinators. (2013 CFRs 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 4.3, 4.4; 2023 CFRs 4.4, 2.1, 2.3, 4.5, 4.6)

The 2025 SV Report documents the introduction of several improvements into academic program reviews and academic planning processes, including a 7-year review cycle, a focus on data-centered reflection, central provision of data and training for those undertaking reviews, and credit in retention, tenure, and promotion (RTP) actions for faculty leading reviews.

During the SV, interviewees shared evidence that these recent updates are taking root and starting to impact university culture. The team heard that training workshops are well-attended, that departments are actively using the data in Nuventive even in non-review years; that review reports show active reflection and a new sense of departmental agency; that the Academic Planning Committee provides the Academic Senate a summary of common themes from the year's reports to make them more widely known; that deans are integrating the new processes into their work with departments; and that department meetings make assessment a regular part of the agenda. Numerous stakeholders mentioned a widespread sense that assessment is becoming understood as being at the core of helping students learn and grow.

It was noted that discontinuing the practice of “assigned time” for one individual faculty member to write the departmental review report has led to a more collaborative approach in which multiple department members participate.

The 2025 SV Report did not discuss how data about or reflection on program learning outcomes are integrated into the revised review process. However, during the SV, stakeholders described and gave examples of how program learning outcomes now play a central role both in those formal processes and in more general faculty efforts to improve individual courses or develop new degree programs.

During the SV, the team identified several topics for further consideration:

- In future reports, include direct discussion of how program learning outcomes are integrated into academic planning and review processes.
- In future reports, describe the expectations and deliverables in each year of the 7-year review cycle.
- What are the distinct and complementary roles of the Academic Planning Committee, the Assessment Committee and the Accreditation Committee? What structures, beyond overlapping members, are in place to ensure effective collaboration among these groups?

Based on review of the institutional report and accompanying documents, and meetings with multiple stakeholders across the institution, the team believes the institution is making satisfactory progress on this issue. As more departments cycle through the new review and planning processes in the next few years, it will be possible to make a fuller assessment of their impacts. The team recommends that SJSU continue to integrate learning outcomes into a strategic and inclusive planning process with leadership at all levels, faculty, staff, administration, curriculum committees, and assessment coordinators (CFR 2.3, 2.9). The team further recommends that SJSU establish and communicate a shared framework for undergraduate advising and counseling services to ensure student success (CFR 2.3, 2.12, 2.13, 4.1).

H. Issue 8: Institutional Research Capacity

Assess the ability of institutional research to effect positive change across the institution and focus institutional research efforts to sustainably support student academic success throughout the institution. (2013 CFRs 1.2, 2.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3; 2023 CFRs 4.4, 2.10, 4.2, 4.1, 4.4, 4.5)

Since the last visit, SJSU has reorganized its Institutional Research Office. During the 2022 visit, Institutional Research was part of the portfolio of a Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Analytics. This office portfolio also included assessment and academic space management. The office was routinely understaffed due to the competition for data analysts throughout Silicon Valley. After 2022, there was an administrative reorganization. Academic Space Management was relocated to another Vice President's portfolio and Assessment was housed under the portfolio of the Vice Provost for Academic Innovation and Institutional Effectiveness. Now directly reporting to the provost's office, the Institutional Research and Strategic Analytics (IRSA) Office has grown and has begun working more closely with institutional partners. It is clear from the review of documents and meetings with various stakeholders during the visit that this reorganization has had a positive effect on the office, both in terms of increasing capacity as well as increasing morale. The team heard during multiple interviews that the culture of the office has changed, promoting team efforts over individual projects leading to greater efficiency and subsequent ability to develop new projects with partners across the institution.

The 2022 CAL also recommended that the office move from a Chancellor's Office focused entity to one that works with campus partners to better serve the SJSU community. From the report and interviews during the site visit, the team learned that IRSA now focuses the bulk of its efforts on student academic success, partnering with departments and divisions across the institution, participating in trainings for the Assessment Management System, Nuventive, and

responding to individualized data requests using the Chancellor’s Office dashboard, PeopleSoft, EAB and other systems locally available.

The team believes this 2022 recommendation has been fully addressed.

I. Issue 9: Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

San Jose State in partnership with CSU System leadership shall conduct a critical review of the Moss Landing Consortium to include: (a) developing and implementing long-range strategic plans outlining the support strategy for the Consortium and clarifying the role and expected outcomes of SJSU’s participations (2013 CFRs 1.7, 4.1; 2023 CFRs 1.3, 4.1); (b) developing and implementing improvements in the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees and in student support services (2013 CFRs 1.2, 1.6, 1.7, 2.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.3; 2023 CFRs 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.5)

Moss Landing Marine Laboratory (MLML) has undergone two major shifts since the 2022 accreditation visit. The first shift is that the CSU system reconfigured the facility from a consortium with a governing board to a two-campus partnership with an advisory board. The second shift is that, as part of the administrative reconfiguration, the CSU negotiated a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two institutions most invested in MLML – SJSU and California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB). Both shifts represent important and positive changes for MLML, however, communication about the significance and necessity of these shifts remains an issue of contention between staff, students, and faculty on the one hand and university administration on the other hand.

During the special visit, the team heard from multiple stakeholders in agreement that the MOU is a move in the “right” direction but that some hiccups and hurdles remain in implementing the partnership, particularly in student support. For example, SJSU students are now supposed to be granted CSUMB identification cards to access student services like health facilities, but access remains inconsistent and problematic. The team was told during the visit that there is a CSUMB staff member dedicated to ensuring that students at MLML, including SJSU students, know about and receive adequate support. But it is unclear to students who that

person is, how to engage with that person, and what systems are in place to ensure continuity if the person takes a vacation or departs the institution. Over time and with attention from leadership at both campuses these hiccups should dissipate. The team believes that SJSU must continue to actively monitor this relationship to ensure there is no decline in the quality and integrity of student degrees.

There is also concern that understaffing at MLML results in some staff being overworked and that a lack of committed resources has constrained the ability to address longstanding issues with aging machinery and equipment. For example, it took over a year to begin work to replace faulty fume hoods, impacting research laboratories throughout the facility. This risks the ability of students to fulfill their goals and of faculty to adequately engage students in the necessary laboratory and research experiences needed to be successful.

To be clear, students still believe they are receiving quality educations and value the collaborative research and pedagogical partnerships they have developed. As well, data provided at the request of the team demonstrates solid student retention and graduation rates and an impressive list of research, scholarly, and creative activity from students and recent graduates. The team believes that MLML must be adequately staffed and resourced before there are negative implications on the meaning, quality and integrity of the degrees earned there.

The new strategic planning process provides an opportunity to develop lines of transparent and open communication with the entire MLML community that better integrate the voices of the students, staff, and faculty into decision-making processes and a purposeful action agenda. The 2022 recommendation was that a new strategic plan incorporate both long-range and a support strategy for MLML. As of the time of this SV, the new strategic plan has not been written and the strategic planning committee has met infrequently. The most recent work appears

to be the development of a survey for all stakeholders, but that survey has not yet been administered. Several valid reasons were noted for the delay in developing the strategic plan, most notably the significant administrative changes noted above, and the departure of the former director followed by the hiring of a new director.

While foundational progress has been made, the SV team again recommends that SJSU develop, fund, and communicate a strategic plan that implements the new MLML MOU. Based on what was learned during the SV, the team believes this plan will be most effective if it includes realistic budgets and timelines to implement the plan (CFR 1.1, 1.7).

SECTION III – OTHER TOPICS, AS APPROPRIATE

N/A

SECTION IV – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TEAM REVIEW

The recommendations reflect updated perspectives on the issues identified in the 2022 Commission Action Letter.

Commendations

The team commends SJSU for:

1. A shared university-wide commitment to student success as demonstrated by improving student persistence and graduation rates.
2. The development of measurable goals for positive change through integration of campuswide initiatives.

Recommendations

The team recommends that SJSU:

1. Develop a common understanding of shared governance including the roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders (faculty, staff, administration, and students) (CFR 2.5, 2.6, 4.1)
2. Execute planned comprehensive assessment of campus climate and act on the findings (CFR 3.2, 4.3).
3. Establish and communicate a shared framework for undergraduate advising and counseling services to ensure student success (CFR 2.3, 2.12, 2.13, 4.1).
4. Continue to integrate learning outcomes into a strategic and inclusive planning process with leadership at all levels, faculty, staff, administration, curriculum committees, and assessment coordinators (CFR 2.3, 2.9).
5. Develop, fund, and communicate a strategic plan that implements the Moss Landing Marine Laboratories' MOU (CFR 1.1, 1.7).