SDSU All University Convocation 08.17.23

[MUSIC PLAYING]

>> Welcome to the 2023 All-University Convocation. Please be sure to silence your cell phones.”

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[CHANTING]

[DRUM LINE PLAYING]

[APPLAUSE]

>> BRITTANY SANTOS DEGRIEG: Good morning.

>> ALL: Good Morning!

Welcome to the 2023 San Diego State All-University Convocation.

I’m Brittany Santos-Derieg, President de la Torre’s Chief of Staff.

I could not be more excited to start today’s program and we have so much good news to share throughout the hour.

But first, it is my distinct pleasure to introduce SDSU’s Tribal Liaison, Mr. Jacob Alvarado Waipuk who will provide the Kumeyaay Land Acknowledgement.

>> JACOB ALVARADO WAIPUK: We stand upon a land that carries the footsteps of millennia of Kumeyaay people. They are a people whose traditional lifeways intertwine with a worldview of earth and sky in a community of living beings. This land is part of a relationship that has nourished, healed, protected and embraced the Kumeyaay people to the present day. It is part of a world view founded in the harmony of the cycles of the sky and balance in the forces of life. For the Kumeyaay, red and black represent the balance of those forces that provide for harmony within our bodies as well as the world around us.

As students, faculty, staff and alumni of San Diego State University we acknowledge this legacy from the Kumeyaay. We promote this balance in life as understanding. We find inspiration in the Kumeyaay spirit to open our minds and hearts. It is the legacy of the red and black. It is the land of the Kumeyaay.

Eyay e’Hunn My heart is good.

>> BRITTANY SANTOS DEGRIEG: Thank you, Jacob.

I would now like to welcome everyone again. Thank you for being a part of our Aztec family.

I would also like to recognize our new faculty and staff. We are pleased to welcome you to our San Diego State University family!

[APPLAUSE]

SDSU is a wonderful and exciting place to work, to learn, to teach and to do research. We look forward to the leadership, creativity and energy you will bring to our campus community.

Our wish is that your time at San Diego State University will be both productive and rewarding. We extend our most sincere welcome to you all!

I would now like to acknowledge some of our university leaders and distinguished guests. Members of the Council of Vice Presidents, Academic Deans Council, SDSU Alumni Board of Advisors and our Associated Students Executive Officers.

Could you all please rise and be acknowledged? Welcome to Convocation, guys.

Thank you for joining us.

I would also like to acknowledge our other guests joining us on stage:

Associate Professor and University Senate Chair, Dr. Nola Butler-Byrd

President of Associated Students, Tarek Morsy

President of the SDSU Alumni Board of Advisors, Samuel Brown

Interim Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. William Tong

President Adela de la Torre and

The guests of honor. Recipients of the SDSU Alumni Distinguished Faculty Award and the recipient of the SDSU Staff Lifetime Achievement Award.

Please join me in welcoming them.

[APPLAUSE]

Last year was a year of achievement for our SDSU community. We will now share a short video that celebrates some of these moments before President de la Torre provides her convocation address.

[VIDEO PLAYING]

>> And now please welcome San Diego State University’s President, Dr. Adela de la Torre.

Good Morning and Welcome to the 2023 All-University Convocation!

Please join me in a moment of silence for those who lost their lives as a result of the catastrophic fires in Maui last week.

Five years ago, in 2018, I came to this stage with wonderment, excitement and some trepidation. It was the first time for me as president to welcome the campus community with my vision for the future.

In that speech, I committed to collaborating with faculty to identify and amplify our areas of distinction, developing exemplary relationships—nationally, bi-nationally, and internationally, committing to a process of transparent and timely communication, improving shared benefits through what was known as the Mission Valley project, growing the capacity of SDSU Imperial Valley, and nurturing a culture where we listen and engage in productive dialogue…

In my five years, I have not lost my connection to those commitments. And I am so proud of the progress that we have made together.

As I look back at the path that we have traveled together during that time, I want to reflect on our past and on our journey moving forward.

From the beginning, the magic of SDSU was not lost on me for a moment.

Just five months into my journey, the voters of San Diego overwhelmingly endorsed our vision of an expanded campus community in Mission Valley, which would forever transform the future of SDSU and the opportunities available to our students and faculty.

This was followed by our collective efforts to develop a comprehensive strategic plan that would guide the campus toward our future vision – “We Rise, We Defy.” The plan established foundational goals – Students at Our Core, Inclusion and Diversity in Everything We Do, We are One SDSU, Research One, and Sustainability. We also established specific milestones within those goals to measure our progress.

Today, we have achieved more than 70% of the plan we set forward. We should be proud of the progress we have made together, yet our work is not done. These goals still resonate and must still guide us forward toward our future. In fact, this year I'm not looking to launch any new initiatives. We don't need to. The goals we collectively set out in 2020 still hold true.

And we cannot forget the magnitude of the impact of the pandemic. It transformed every aspect of human life – how we worked, traveled, and simply engaged in daily life. As a university, it transformed how we were able to pursue our purpose as educators.

The residual toll – both emotional and physical – lingers with us today. It still affects the academic preparation and experiences of our students. And it still affects how each of us feels – how we manage stress and how we navigate the many demands on our time. We must be mindful that this experience will cast a shadow on our lives for years to come.

These are realities I recognize.

Nevertheless, the truth of the matter is that the SDSU community, from my perspective, continued to rise like a Phoenix during these turbulent times, true to our strategic plans. The sheer pride of our students, their love for SDSU and their excitement for the future is awe inspiring. We continued to Rise and Defy expectations on multiple fronts despite unprecedented challenges.

Leadership and individuals at all levels – students, faculty and staff – leaned in to transform adversity to opportunity. Despair to hope. Hatred to love. Restrictions to access. I’m so grateful to everyone involved. It's what makes SDSU so incredibly unique – and I mean that. I've been at other university systems and campuses for 40 years. The community of SDSU is remarkable.

Let me give a tangible example. Our anger and hurt from the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor…and the social unrest that followed…was transformed into collective *action*. We've more than doubled the number of Black faculty on our campus. We invested in our Black Resource Center and eliminated – to zero – first-year equity gaps for our Black students. We opened the fabulous Library Africana Resource Space led by our own Maureen Dotson, with the guidance of our faculty in Africana Studies…

Maureen – your love for our students brings harmony and hope in our lives…. Thank you….

[APPLAUSE]

Throughout my years here, we have placed our strategic goal of “Students at our Core” center-stage in everything we do. We have the metrics to show this.

The CSU system established its “Graduation Initiative 2025,” which set ambitious goals for increasing graduation rates across the 23 CSU campuses. While we’re not to 2025 yet, SDSU has already achieved and surpassed the system-wide graduation-rate goals!

For first-time students, it set a 6-year graduation goal of 70% – SDSU is already at 78%. The initiative also sets a 4-year graduation goal for first-time students of 40%. At SDSU, we have long surpassed that goal, and today have a majority of our first-time students graduating in 4 years.

At the same time, we’ve also closed achievement gaps. The gap in 6-year graduation rates for underrepresented minority students versus non-underrepresented students has dropped to low single digits.

We also have seen great improvements in persistence. Most students who fall out of higher education do it after their first year. At SDSU, our persistence rate is over 90% for all of our students!

We’ve drastically improved in how we support our students financially. In 2017, only 61% of scholarship funds made their way to students. Compare that to today. With our recently launched Aztec Scholarships Portal, we were able to distribute 99.6% of available funds directly into the pockets of our students. Last year, we distributed more than $300 million and more than 70% of our students received financial aid or scholarships.

I can't tell you how important this goal is to me. And I know this is a goal shared by our students.

Each Fall, our Associated Students leaders set out a vision and theme for the year. They have thoughtfully and collaboratively pushed us to be attuned to what is most significant in their lives, and how we can best serve these needs. Today we will hear from this year’s AS president, Tarek Morsy. I am so happy for the opportunity to work with him.

Having already spoken with Tarek and his leadership team, there is great synergy between AS priorities this year and the university’s strategic goals. This is not an anomaly of a year or a moment. Rather, it reflects the alignment of the vision we share with our students.

Indeed, it is because our AS student leaders have consistently had such a profound willingness to collaborate with all constituents, and have such a deep commitment to the wellbeing of the entire SDSU community, that SDSU is a better place for all even during the most difficult times.

When I look back at our accomplishments these past five years, I must applaud and acknowledge our faculty, staff, students and community…in what they have done and will continue to do. I could be up here for hours recounting those accomplishments, so instead I would like to take a moment and highlight just a few of them:

Let’s begin by celebrating the success of our Athletics department. Who could ever forget the magical run of our Men’s Basketball team to the NCAA national finals in Houston? Lamont Butlers’ buzzer-beating shot in the final four that pushed us into the National Championship game… and how our coaches, athletic staff and student athletes transformed lives at that moment for us and the nation.

Last year we also saw the Aztecs capture conference and league championships in swimming & diving, men’s golf, softball, and baseball.

In the past 5 years, external funding for faculty research has grown by more than 40%. This year, we received a record-breaking $192.2 million in grants and contracts from more than 300 sources. That figure leads the CSU system and puts us closer to our strategic goal of earning R1 status.   
  
Why does this matter? Since more than 90% of federal research dollars go to the 147 universities classified as R1, our faculty can now have access and more opportunities to compete for these funds.  
  
When I was an undergrad, I would never have been able to imagine myself pursuing a doctorate degree or pushing the boundaries of my field if I hadn't been around faculty who integrated their research into their teaching. I was inspired to see the opportunities for myself and my community because my local university also happened to be an R1 with exceptional faculty embedded in cutting edge research. I am a firm believer in the benefit of that experience, and I think every SDSU student – every first-generation and underrepresented minority student – deserves that opportunity.   
When I arrived at SDSU in 2018, we were concluding a major capital campaign. While we have not launched a formal new campaign since, the philanthropy of our generous supporters has not wavered and remains as high as ever.   
  
This year we received a record $136.9 million in gifts. Since 2018, we have raised $650 million. This shows how deeply our community trusts and cares for SDSU. And it has allowed us to support our students, expand our research and change lives.

True to my promise in 2018, we continue to invest in SDSU Imperial Valley. We have expanded student services, degree programs and facilities. And with the vast promise of the Lithium Valley, the state of California has put its faith in us with an $80 million investment in a new STEM building.

And, following the initial success of SDSU Georgia, this year saw us renew the program for another four years. Fully self-funded with our partners and the government of Georgia, our collaboration is helping to address the country’s severe workforce shortage in STEM fields. Importantly, it is also helping Georgia to create its own infrastructure and accreditation for STEM education in its home universities.

And as a transborder university and a proud Hispanic-Serving Institution, last year’s opening of our Mesoamerican Studies Center in Oaxaca, Mexico demonstrated our commitment to Indigenous languages, culture and research.

These successes are just a few of the many we’ve experienced together. And they are a testament to all of you in this room today. We have made this happen despite the collective trauma and disruption we have experienced and the challenges we personally have navigated.

This is why I am ever hopeful for the future and the vision that we share.

Thank you all for letting me lead – *with you* – this great institution.

I would like to end my remarks today by turning my attention to the future and sharing my theme for this academic year. My thoughts consistently turn to three words:

Harmony, purpose and depth…

I share this theme not only to recognize our past accomplishments, but also to challenge us to continue to rise above the chaos of dissent that undermines civility, respect, and our ability to listen with intent and purpose.

Ever present today is the chaos of political and economic uncertainty. Vitriol and polarization are very real in our popular discourse, but WE, as a community, must be better than that if …We are to move forward with our purpose to serve our students and each other.

WE, as a community, must reach into our shared values and goals and recognize the depth of our purpose at this institution at this time.

WE – as individuals and with our colleagues – must prioritize care for one another, respect for one another, and clarity of purpose.

It is often through the simplest actions that we have the most profound effects. Indeed, simplicity can result in the most elegant results. With these simple words – harmony, purpose and depth – we will leave today aligned in our belief that we will continue to Rise and Defy….with the love and courage we have all shown in our hearts.

Mil Gracias! Go Aztecs!

>> BRITTANY SANTOS DEGRIEG: Thank you, President de la Torre.

It is now my privilege to recognize the recipients of this year’s Presidential Staff Excellence Award. If you don’t already know these fine individuals, I encourage you to greet them and get to know them. They are a wonderful group who collectively represent what is best about San Diego State University.

Will our awardees please stand when I call your name?

This year’s Team Effort award goes to the College of Engineering Advising Team. This team collaborates with faculty, department chairs, the dean and others to provide course planning and help students progress through their majors to graduation. They also provide support for scholarships, internships and jobs.

Last fall, each member of this hard-working team led a seminar course for first-year engineering students, and they all represented the college in March at the Science and Engineering Festival at Petco Park. As one of several nominations for this award put it, they are “fully invested in the success of our engineering students” and helping them reach their full potential at SDSU.

I’m told that these five advisors work like a family and share a lot of experiences outside of work hours, and they all have individual strengths that contribute to the beautiful dynamic of a great team.

We recognize:

Claudia Gavaldon

Sarah Hershberger

Leviticus Johnson

Zuzanna Lever

and Juno Paláu

Congratulations to this incredible team!

[APPLAUSE]

In the staff-to-staff mentoring category, we have two recipients this year.

Magaly Corro Flores, assistant director of the Undocumented Resource Center, was nominated for several reasons. She provided vital mentorship to a new, inexperienced program coordinator, helping her to navigate the structure of SDSU.

Magaly who is a double alumna of SDSU, has also stepped up to acclimate employees of the university’s other cultural centers, and filled a vacancy at the Center for Transformative Justice as interim project manager, providing leadership and mentorship to its staff and students.

Her knowledge of admissions and various connections have proven to be invaluable in her many roles and as a mentor to others. Magaly continues to pay it forward and inspire those around her.

In staff-to-staff mentoring, we also honor Bridget Frattalone department coordinator for the Army ROTC program, serving as liaison with the U.S. Army.

Bridget, who is also an SDSU MBA, works with representatives across campus to ensure that each year’s incoming and departing ROTC Cadres have smooth transitions. She also holds leadership roles in the annual 9/11 remembrance ceremony, the fall and spring awards ceremonies for Cadets, and the commissioning ceremonies held at the USS Midway Museum.

I also want to share one of the stories in Bridget’s nomination. When high school students apply for a national-level ROTC scholarship, they have to interview with a professor of military science to accompany the application. During the height of the pandemic, many students said they couldn’t get a response to their interview requests from other universities. But at SDSU, Bridget not only responded to all of those calls and voicemails, but also got them their interviews.

Congratulations, Magaly and Bridget!

[APPLAUSE]Our honoree for community service, Rosie Villafana-Hatcher has supported student success at SDSU for almost 21 years, and is now our director of early assessment in the Center for Educational Partnerships, Outreach and Success which is an academic preparation program within the division of Student Affairs and Campus Diversity.

Rosie is being recognized for her strong record of success in applying for and securing highly competitive grants, including the recent Community Partnership Initiative grant from CSU. This is a grant supporting outreach with the Barrio Logan College Institute that addresses some of our most critical community service needs, including academic preparation for students from low-income families and closing achievement gaps.

Her work to build bridges between SDSU and many marginalized communities is in perfect alignment with SDSU’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Congratulations, Rosie! Rosie could not be here today.

[APPLAUSE]

Our honoree for service to the university is Jun Dandan a longtime fixture of our mail services department, now under the Logistical Services division.

He is a familiar face in virtually every office, where his timely delivery of packages and mail is greatly appreciated. He is known across our campus for his strong work ethic, friendly personality and ready smile.

The person who nominated Jun for this award said there was a time when it was not uncommon for packages of perishable lab supplies and other materials to be so delayed in their campus delivery that they would be ruined. But from the time Jun began working directly for the Research Foundation, he took great care in making sure these packages got where they belonged. The nomination for this award said, “He always went that extra step and still does.” We’re all grateful to Jun for the service, care and positivity he brings to the SDSU campus.

I’d also like to wish him a very Happy Birthday today!

Congratulations, Jun!

[APPLAUSE]

In the auxiliary support category, we recognize Lindsay Vance, senior director of instructional design for SDSU’s Global Campus. Lindsay has had a very expansive and prominent impact as leader of the ITS project team responsible for the launch of my.SDSU, our new Student Information System.

From how-to guides and training sessions to direct, individual assistance, Lindsay spent countless hours providing support to faculty, staff and students for this very important transition, which at last aligned SDSU’s Student Information System with the rest of the CSU.

The multiple nominations of Lindsay for this award also mentioned how, in just over three years at SDSU, she has come to be admired by the Global Campus staff for her guidance, constructive feedback, her empathy and for developing and nurturing a positive work culture.

Congratulations, Lindsay!

[APPLAUSE]

In the innovation and creativity category, we recognize Aaron Brown, a health education specialist for the Well-Being and Health Promotion team.

Aaron has been instrumental in SDSU’s response to the opioid epidemic, and to the alarming risk of death from overdoses. He was deeply involved in creating the Narcan Upstander Distribution Program, which trains students who may need access to treatment for a potential opioid overdose.

Aaron, who earned his MBA at SDSU with a concentration in Health Services, brought his personal knowledge of harm-reduction practices to create this in-person and online training program. Since its inception in 2019, more than 600 students have completed the training, and – in a testament to how creative and innovative the training is – it has become a model used by many other universities. Most importantly, we know that Aaron’s training has been used to save lives in emergency situations. Obviously, there can be no more meaningful impact on our campus community.

Congratulations, Aaron!

[APPLAUSE]

And our final honoree is for Manager of the Year.

Rose Pasenelli has served students at SDSU for more than 30 years, from her first days as a financial aid counselor to her current position as associate vice president of student financial resources.

Her many responsibilities in this role include leadership of the basic needs department and our very vital Economic Crisis Response Team, assisting needy students. In a nomination for this award, a member of her department said Rose’s “tenacity, compassion, thoughtfulness, communication style and collaborative energy has kept our vision clear.”

We’re enormously grateful to Rose for providing long-term stability and leadership that benefits thousands of students, many in their most vulnerable moments.

Congratulations, Rose!

[APPLAUSE]

Once again, please join me in a round of applause for all of our 2023 Presidential Staff Excellence awardees. Congratulations!

[APPLAUSE]

It’s now my pleasure to introduce University Senate Chair Dr. Nola Butler-Byrd.

>> DR. NOLA BUTLER- BYRD: Thank you for your kind introduction.

Good morning SDSU Community! I’m Nola Butler Byrd, University Senate Chair and Associate Professor and Director of the Community-Based Block (CBB) Multicultural Community Counseling and Social Justice Education Program in the Department of Counseling and School Psychology in the College of Education. CBB is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

On behalf of the University Senate, I thank all students, faculty, staff, parents, friends, and community supporters for choosing to be part of the SDSU Community during Academic Year 2023/24!

The University Senate serves as a forum for shared governance, communication, and dialogue between the campus community, University administration and advises the President. The senate is a representative body composed of faculty, staff, and students who are elected, appointed and ex-officio members that uses deliberative democratic processes to carefully consider important issues and policy decisions.

Democracy is a powerful system of governance that must be cultivated, practiced, and supported in order to survive. Currently, our democratic voting rights, body autonomy, freedom to learn and other human rights are being eroded. Book bans and miseducation about the history of this country are being imposed. Higher Education institutions are under attack because we challenge those who espouse freedom of expression, but are really seeking to impose their divisive, exclusionary, autocratic agendas.

Our Senate has several important principles that guide our work and maintain the soul and spirit of democracy on our campus. These include our Principles of Community and Shared Governance, and our University Statement on Diversity, which states:

“As a University committed to learning in all its forms, San Diego State University recognizes the need to attract and retain a critical mass of diverse persons who will advance its goals and ideals. This fundamental commitment to diversity 1) enriches the institution and provides an atmosphere in which all human potential is valued, 2) promotes learning through interactions among people of different backgrounds and many perspectives, and 3) better enables the University to prepare all members of its community to promote social responsibility, equity, freedoggm, and productive citizenship in a global society. Our Principles of Community and Shared Governance “...acknowledge that imbalances of power, accessibility, equity, and privilege persist in higher education and in society and [we] are committed to addressing and dismantling these imbalances. Further, We promote a culture of inclusion in which all are valued and treated with respect, dignity, and fairness so that they may thrive”.

Right now we need to use these principles and the wisdom we’ve derived from the challenges we’ve faced and the many setbacks we’ve experienced to deal civilly and effectively with the current backlash against inclusivity and multicultural democracy. In addition to budget challenges, leadership transitions, and collective bargaining, we’re gearing up to implement recommendations from the Cozen O’Connor Title IX Report—the most comprehensive Title IX assessment of any university system in the nation. These challenges will require us all to work together with respect, dignity and fairness, even though we may differ in our opinions.

We’re being reminded of how it feels to be let down and experience unreliability and that is not who we were born to be. In order to maintain our democracy and true freedom of expression, we all must find the courage to stand up and do our part. Courage is being afraid, but doing what you need to do anyway. Everyone is needed and we can’t afford to wait for someone to lead us. We all have the capacity to lead in our zones of influence. Keep doing your work and lean into the discomfort of challenges, because doing so will be extremely beneficial for us all in the long run. Don’t resort to apathy, boredom or being overwhelmed. We must challenge and support each other to to take concerted action for human rights in the small places, close to home, on campus, with your friends, family, classmates, and those you encounter who may need support or to be challenged… to ensure that everyone receives equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination.

We must persevere, using the kind of love that the great scholar bell hooks described: “Love is a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust…To love well is the task in all meaningful relationships, not just romantic bonds."

The University Senate is committed to doing the work of multicultural democracy, human rights, and shared governance. We are serious about upholding SDSU’s commitment to social justice and the well-being of our community. Please bring issues and concerns to our attention, so that we can address them.

I hope that this will be a richly rewarding and healing year for all of us!

Finally, one of the great benefits of my position is the opportunity to work with student leaders. I am so impressed by their dedication to SDSU and their eagerness to engage their student colleagues and the larger community. It is this unrelenting motivation that helps them balance their academics with their duties as officers.

I now have the good fortune to introduce one of those student leaders: Tarek Morsy, President of Associated Students. Tarek is a senior from Danville, California majoring in finance.

Please join me in welcoming Tarek Morsy.

[APPLAUSE]

>> TAREK MORSY: Hello Everyone and Welcome!

My name is Tarek Morsy and I am excited and honored to speak with you all today!

SDSU is in a unique position right now. We are innovating. We are expanding, and it is exciting. The progress we see is a testament to the phenomenal work and effort everyone in this room contributes. Not only are we on our way to becoming one of the top universities in the nation, but I believe that we are doing it in a balanced and sustainable way. When people ask me about the progress that SDSU is making, I don’t know whether to tell them about research, or about athletics, or about our entrepreneurial programs, or about the MLS deal or about the fact that our incoming class of students has the highest average GPA in our history. I could go on and on. And that is the sign of a healthy university undergoing multidimensional growth. Your hard work manifests itself in every sphere of our university.

Because of this explosion of progress across different initiatives, we are in unprecedented times. Unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures. The most strategic way to adjust accordingly to this growth is to team up and cooperate this year on an unprecedented level. We must capitalize on, leverage, and maximize the progress we see or it would be an opportunity gone in the wind. That is why A.S believes that the SDSU climate this year is extremely conducive to strengthening our shared governance.

My team and I hope University staff, faculty, administration and A.S can come together as one to GET STUFF DONE. We chose together as one to GET STUFF DONE as our theme for this year because anytime anyone needs to get anything done, or needs to complete a large task, they must work with others. Working with others is inextricably tied to progress. Working with others takes discourse, it takes debate, and then it takes compromise. An Intrinsic concept that is baked within A.S’s theme (pause) GET STUFF DONE is cooperative symbiotic relationships. With strengthened relationships we can be more efficient and more effective.

So, exactly what stuff do we want to get done together? A.S.’s top priority this year is to systemize and develop strategies that advance student careers, and increase the value of the SDSU degree, which will benefit the students of today, the students of tomorrow and even the students that graduated forty years ago. Now, even though this goal will be adopted by each and every one of our 80 councilmembers. It is not guaranteed to be achieved. To achieve this, we all need to work together as one. One of the strategic plan’s goals is Students at Our Core – a commitment to a future where all students are able to achieve their greatest potential. Students who graduate having realized their potential and leaving with a more valuable degree will experience a more prosperous career which fulfills the intention behind the existence of a university in the first place. During this unprecedented time of progress, I want Associated Students to be a critical part of achieving that goal.

Associated Students will advance student careers by developing a strategy with career services to give students a competitive edge in the job market, we will advance student careers by enhancing the network between students and Alumni, and we will advance student careers through utilizing different councils of A.S as an avenue to promote internships and future opportunities for students!

We have a multitude of university wide initiatives evolving before our eyes. As we continue to watch our ambition realize fruition the average student continues to have a proportionally more enjoyable experience on campus. It is safe to say that our University is on a continued path to excellence. My team and I want to continue to cultivate this excellence by developing an A.S strategy that enhances campus growth initiatives. We want to increase the visibility of our student resources through on campus partnerships and initiatives. We want to work together to improve my.sdsu. AND these are just some of the ways that A.S will play its role in cultivating excellence on our campus.

Everyone in this room shares a common interest, not just A common interest, but THE only common interest. Students! All of our effort boils down to the same thing, creating a better life for each and every student. We all have the same ultimate goal, we all have the same endgame. There may be a point in time where the approach to reaching that ultimate goal may differ. This is exactly the point in time where discourse is critical. Discussion and debate breed innovation. Different opinions do not constitute a disconnect, that would mean serving our students ineffectively. I am predicting that for the rest of my life that I will never walk into a room where everyone believes 100% of 100% of exactly everything everyone else in the room believes. So how do we handle that natural part of life? Do opinions become the enemy of progress, do opinions lead to stalemate and halt future discussions. or do opinions breed an even greater, more holistic, more convincing solution. I know that I go to the university where the latter is true, because Our university experiences no shortage of innovative solutions, and I know we will create more. I am excited to make even more unprecedented progress with you all this year!

[APPLAUSE]

It is now my pleasure to introduce the Interim Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. William Tong and Mr. Samuel Brown, President of the SDSU Alumni Board of Advisors.

Dr. William Tong has a long history at SDSU, having joined the faculty in 1985 as an associate professor. In 2005, Dr. Tong was named a Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Most recently, he was appointed interim provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs in June, having previously served as Vice Provost since August 2020.

Samuel Brown is the current SDSU Alumni Board of Advisors President and has served for over 12 years on the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians Tribal Council as its Treasurer and an executive officer. As Treasurer, Sam’s role is to ensure the Tribe meets its fiduciary responsibility in all aspects of its multiple businesses. He also assists in creating and presenting yearly budget and provides quarterly updates to the Tribe throughout the year. He resides on the Viejas Indian reservation and is a second-generation Aztec with both his mom and dad being proud alumni. He received a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering in 1996 and also received a Bachelor of Science in Casino and Hospitality Management from National University in 2013.

Please join me in welcoming Interim Provost Tong and Mr. Samuel Brown.

>> PROVOST TONG: SDSU is an extraordinary university, in large part because of our extraordinary faculty. Among them are masterful, inspirational teachers; phenomenal researchers; committed and engaged citizens of our university community; passionate leaders of their scholarly disciplines (both nationally and internationally); compassionate servants of our SDSU communities and many who excel in all these areas of professional endeavor. Additionally, we have outstanding librarians who are committed to student success and who assist faculty in their professional endeavors.

Because of the generous support of SDSU Alumni, we are able each year to honor one impressive faculty member from each of our colleges and SDSU Imperial Valley with the SDSU Alumni Distinguished Faculty Award.

It is with great pleasure that I stand before you today, to recognize the remarkable achievements of this year’s recipients of the SDSU Alumni Distinguished Faculty Award. It is with great pleasure to stand and recognize:

From the College of Arts and Letters Dr. Pascale Joassart-Marcelli

From the Fowler College of Business

Dr. Michelle Dean  
Dr. Dean could not be here with us today, but we send her our congratulations.

From the College of Education

Dr. James Marshall  
From the College of Engineering:

Dr. Mahasweta Sarkar

From the College of Health and Human Services

Dr. Eunha Hoh

From the College of Professional Studies and   
Fine Arts  
Peter Cirino. Peter could not be here with us today, but we send him our congratulations!

From the College of Sciences Dr. Tom Huxford

From SDSU Imperial Valley

Dr. Jeanette Shumaker

Please join me in congratulating all of our awardees! [APPLAUSE]

And now I would like to welcome President de la Torre back to the podium.

>> ADELA DE LA TORRE: Thank you, Interim Provost Tong.

It is now truly my honor to announce the recipient of the SDSU Staff Lifetime Achievement Award. This is the third year we will be awarding this recognition. The prestigious award was created to recognize an exemplary staff member who has made significant contributions to the mission of the university throughout their career.

In order to be eligible, nominated staff members must have served the university for a minimum of 15 years and received at least 3 letters of recommendation to accompany the nomination.

We will now watch a special video highlighting this year’s recipient.

>> ADELA DE LA TORRE: Congratulations Maureen, and thank you for your tireless commitment to making our library a welcoming space for research, learning and collaboration. Please join me at the podium. [APPLAUSE]

>> BRITTANY SANTOS DEGRIEG: Congratulations again to all of our award recipients!

A sincere thank you for sharing your morning with us. We hope you enjoy the “grab and go” lunches that will be distributed as you walk down to Goldberg Courtyard.

Again, thank you for being here and best wishes for a great year! Go Aztecs!