



Thank you, Wil, for that introduction.

As we are preparing for the end of the academic year, and with today marking the last University Senate meeting, I would like to convey, first, my appreciation and gratitude for our instructional and research faculty and student leaders.

Our momentum this year, the strategic goals we have met, the expanded academic and research programs, and the dedicated support we offer to our faculty, staff and students have been monumental and, in some ways, unprecedented.

This academic year has been marked by many achievements and improvements. Today, I will focus on several key areas:

- How we are delivering promises made through our strategic plan
- Investments we have made and will continue to make in our faculty
- How we are improving the ability of our students to be both engaged and highly successful
- Projects underway to address our infrastructure needs
- Our expanding donor support
- Major research and graduate student investments
- And I will provide an update on our progress with SDSU Mission Valley and major developments at SDSU Imperial Valley

While I am focusing on these topics today, you should also know that these items do not reflect the total range of top priorities I have, and that the leadership team on this campus have. In addition to the priorities here, many of you are well aware of the many other efforts to continue to enhance the support we offer to our faculty, staff and students in crisis.

The pandemic has made apparent to colleges and universities across the nation the need to expand counseling and wellness services and interventions, intrusive advising practices,

emergency aid, and housing and basic needs support. I am grateful to our community for standing up, often quickly, with new resources to help those going through a difficult time.

Also, this year is the 50th anniversary of Title IX. As you know, our California State University is addressing significant issues within the system and across several of our peer campuses. My own commitment to an environment free of harassment, discrimination and violence is reflected in my history as a community health expert, and in the priorities placed on enhancing our prevention and response. I established SDSU's first standalone offices for this work prior to and during the pandemic, and appreciate that several teams on our campus have been extraordinarily diligent over the years updating our policies, procedures and trainings, and also adopting new ways of proactively addressing these issues. It is a topic I am uncompromising about, and hold to the highest possible standard.

We will also continue to prioritize health, wellbeing and safety. Nothing we do is important without those values as a foundation, and we cannot be successful in our work if we are not in a supportive environment free from harm.

Again, during my time with you today I will focus on only a few, limited priorities, beginning with an update on our strategic plan progress.

SDSU Strategic Plan

To date, we have achieved 60% of our strategic plan goals, some of which I will share today.

Through our initiatives in support of enhancing our student experiences around global education, we placed in the top three of last year's Open Doors report for students who study abroad. This is a national ranking.

Also, given our elevated goals related to environmental sustainability, we were very proud to be recognized in The Princeton Review's most recent Guide to Green Colleges.

We were one of 10 universities this year to receive a national certification from Excelencia in Education for our commitment and achievements in serving Latinx students. We also received first ever recognition from the U.S. Department of Education that the university is now recognized as an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI).

This academic year, SDSU Global Campus added more than a half dozen new bachelor's and master's degree programs, including those in economics, child development, civil engineering and public health.

An expanded Aztec Recreation Center opened its doors, and the Native Resource Center reopened in a new home, West Commons, filled with displays of new and beautiful Indigenous artwork.

I am also very excited that new nursing programs will start at SDSU Imperial Valley this fall. The introduction of these programs aligns with our plans to launch new four-year chemistry and engineering degrees also at SDSU Imperial Valley. Our priority for those future programs — which are currently in development for STEM disciplines — are directly associated with what we plan to accomplish in the broader Lithium Valley project. Just last week we had President Biden's Secretary of Energy, Jennifer Granholm, out in the Valley to listen to, and talk to the community about how national investments in renewable energy can bolster forthcoming major state investments in Imperial Valley. This includes supporting SDSU, a key component of the necessary workforce development in the Valley. To be clear, the social and economic multiplier effect of this new industry in Imperial — the county with the highest unemployment level in the state — will be profound. I am optimistic about our funding requests from the state for the future.

Also, we are making progress with SDSU FUERTE, which is bringing a cohort of 11 new faculty focused on Latinx health disparities research, including environmental health, through a \$15 million grant. and providing them with thoughtful career development and mentoring. Three to four of the faculty member lines are designated to join SDSU Imperial Valley.

Student Success

Regarding our students, our projections indicate that we are likely to see another year of strong enrollments and improved student diversity. The progress we have made in student recruitment, student enrollments and, most critically, in graduating our students is an incredibly positive trajectory. It also represents the supportive educational environment and supports our faculty and staff intentionally built around our students.

We were very proud that California State University honored an SDSU Imperial Valley student, Lawson Hardrick III, with the Trustees' Award for Outstanding Achievement, and a 2022 graduate in the College of Engineering, Nicole Hurtado-Savin, received the Howard C. Christiansen Endowed Scholarship. Both of these recognize single, outstanding students in the state of California, and I am incredibly proud they have both gone to deserving SDSU students.

And, notably, our current four-year graduation rate remains on target to either meet or exceed our 2025 goal of 60%. We continue to see equity gaps below 4% in nearly all categories while also remaining on track to fully eliminate many equity gaps by 2025.

The launch of the 2022-23 Aztec Scholarship cycle has over 2,500 applications since going live just a week ago, which will further ensure our philanthropic success translates to direct aid to

students. The average amount awarded to each student is more than \$2,300, and this past year more than 98.5% of all available scholarships were successfully awarded. When I first arrived at SDSU that number was in the low 70s, and far fewer students received awards.

In support of our students, this year we also made our first successful PeopleSoft student information system transition. It was about three years ago that we identified a critical gap and a potential risk of failure of our financial aid system. You cannot be a public university without absolute confidence in your ability to award aid to students quickly and efficiently. So it was immediately a priority of mine to address.

Now, we have a new system, thanks to the my.SDSU team, for this needed and successful transition to stability. Last week, the first week the system was live for financial operations, 1,100 students a day used this system to view their financial aid. I want to thank the cross-divisional team of IT, student affairs, academic affairs, and BFA for their collective efforts to achieve this outcome so we could have a more efficient, streamlined and secure system.

Investments in Faculty and Infrastructure

Also connected to our strategic plan goals, and specific to expanding our research investments and our educational mission, I want to share a few brief examples.

We have moved forward with faculty salary increases for all qualifying employees. The general salary increase offered to qualifying faculty last month followed the agreement reached between the California Faculty Association and the California State University.

Our staff unions are also currently in negotiation with the CSU on successor agreements and reopened economic terms. These timely negotiations will determine compensation for staff. That said, I am excited to share that the results from the comprehensive staff salary study have just been issued. The results and recommendations from this study will assist the CSU in advocating for state funding to support a long-overdue and sustainable compensation model for staff. Critically, the study recommends a reinstatement of the step system, which provides more predictability in regular salary growth for our staff. I could not be more pleased! While contingent upon funding from the state, this provides the strongest yet platform for the system to advocate — and use evidence in concert with its labor unions — for the cost and positive impact this will have on our staff. I, along with other presidents, will be both advocating for this, and following its progress closely at the state level.

Another strategy the system is considering to support a more predictable budget, which can in turn support more predictable faculty and staff salary increases and increases to student support, is a cohort-based model of small tuition increases. This discussion is following a full decade of no increases. While this is all determined at the system level, and has long been a point of pride, it is also a concerning obstacle given the incredibly high rate of inflation impacting fixed costs

for universities, our aging infrastructure, as well as the need to invest in our faculty, staff, and student support services at a significantly higher level. Without a level of predictability, we are less effective in our core mission. But not only that — it is extraordinarily problematic for students caught on the edge when there are sudden increases, after a decade of stability, or triggered by a recession, that can exceed 20 or 30% jumps. What kind of planning is that? It is planning to have no plan, except for during an emergency. Especially when triggered by a recession, that type of tuition model puts the burden almost entirely on students during the worst possible economic time. That cannot be the reaction of our state systems each and every time the state's budget contracts, as it will again and again. So I wanted to share that I am aware these types of discussions are being brought up again at the system and the state.

Coming back to the faculty: We launched a record number of faculty lines this past cycle, 88 lines total. To date we can say that 48 of these searches have already resulted in a signed contract, and many more are coming each week. We are very optimistic that the majority of these lines will be successful. This is such an exciting effort, and brings new ideas and initiatives to our university and community.

I also wanted to acknowledge our faculty-led research teams have collaborated, all year long, on COVID-19 testing initiatives for schools and homes in the South Bay; they have also led the wastewater testing and analysis here on campus and elsewhere, and are identifying solutions to address homelessness and social inequity. Others recently helped identify a new bird species in Brazil and found a new spider in the southern Sierra Nevada. And faculty engineers are working to improve the batteries used in electric vehicles, which is connected to a national conversation at the state and federal level about the untapped opportunities in Imperial County's Lithium Valley.

All of this creative and innovative work is contingent not only on the creativity of innovation of our amazing faculty, but also in our infrastructure.

First, on this point, I must discuss the issue of sustained power given the recent partial power outages on our campus. We are in regular, direct discussion with SDG&E leadership about the criticality of improving our service, as one of the most important clients given the size and scope of our campus and the sensitivity of our researchers' work.

And we are also taking more immediate steps to improve the stability of power on our campus given the ongoing fluxuations we have seen from SDG&E. Our plan includes an overhaul of Substation A, replacing the existing station by constructing a new Substation A, and by installing high performance generators in our research-active buildings as a third layer of backup for consistency, and as is the best practice at most high-research universities. We will be sharing more information with our campus later this year as we formalize the plan to initiate this major construction project.

Also, over the last six years, more than \$9 million has been purposefully dedicated to improvements in our Love Library — a space at the heart of our academic and student life. This funding, and other investments, have led to a range of exterior and interior improvements and renovations, to include security features, improvements to student spaces, ADA bathrooms, elevators, and a new roof, new centers and lounges for our faculty and students, and replacements and upgrades for our compact shelving and other core facilities. Further necessary investments being identified through a facilities assessment started earlier this year.

Major Research and Graduate Student Investments

SDSU has been expanding its investment in research, scholarship, and creative activities. This includes providing research assigned time for faculty, supporting major instrumentation purchases, acquiring databases, and a strong pilot postdoctoral program. These investments are already yielding significant outcomes. This year we received seven NSF CAREER awards, four NEH awards, and we celebrated the publication of 95 books by SDSU faculty. In addition, our awarded grants and contracts are projected to increase by 15%!

SDSU is committed to investing in our current graduate programs. In fall 2021, for example, we increased the number and amount spent on tuition waivers for our graduate students by 25%. We also increased the amount allocated through fellowships and scholarships to graduate students by over 60%, as compared to 2019, including the introduction of the Master's Research Scholarship as a new way to support research and creative activities at the master's level. Finally, we increased stipend and benefit support for TAs and GAs to approximately \$12 million this past fall and are continuing to assess our funding models for graduate students across the university so we can provide competitive offers in supporting our graduate students and our educational and research missions. I also could not be more excited by the proposals from a dozen different academic departments for new doctoral programs, which build on our academic strengths and will help meet core workforce needs.

Donor Support

Gift commitments to SDSU during the 2020-21 fiscal year totaled more than \$133 million. This year, the annual Day of Giving set a record of more than \$685,000. Aztecs Rock Hunger returned to campus and collected more than 534,000 pounds of food to combat hunger and nutrition insecurity. The Dance Marathon at SDSU raised just over \$400,000, another record.

We also had a record-breaking year for endowments in support of our faculty hiring and new and continuing student scholarships. The university received more than \$133.2 million in gift commitments in the 2020-21 fiscal year. This is compared to the systemwide average of just \$25 million in giving. The difference in scale means more resources to SDSU students and faculty,

every day, than we would otherwise ever be able to accomplish. This is thanks to the work of the University Relations and Development team, who worked in collaboration with faculty and staff to inspire donors to advance our educational mission. That our donors continue to invest in our faculty and students is also a reflection of the success of our collective community.

SDSU Mission Valley

We just broke ground on the River Park at SDSU Mission Valley, which has been providing thousands of new jobs to our region, including many new positions for our students. The park is scheduled to be completed at the end of 2023, just one year out. And Snapdragon Stadium is on track to open in September with our new athletic season. The milestones here are on track.

We also just surpassed more than 12,500 advance season ticket sales for football in 2022. Recall that SDSU Mission Valley will not rely on tuition, fees or state dollars, but this kind of self-generating revenue, public-private partnerships, donor support, and other investments in SDSU which we can then direct back into supporting and growing our core academic mission.

As an example, earlier this semester we announced multiple new partners: our founding partner is the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation, and our founding sponsor is San Diego County Toyota Dealers.

We are now preparing to issue the RFP for the first residential project, as well as the first set of affordable housing as part of our primary priorities. Subsidized housing will be prioritized for faculty, staff, and upper-division and graduate students, which is especially timely as the cost of living in San Diego (and across California) continues to increase.

We also recently had a number of commercial developers respond to our first “Request for Information & Qualifications” for our Innovation District. This first project will include approximately 250,000-300,000 square feet of space, which SDSU and its partners can occupy for much needed research and lab space. Interim VP for Research & Innovation Hala Madanat has also identified several public and private partners who also intend to be tenants working alongside the university. It is so important to me that we leverage the financial independence of the Mission Valley site, under the P3 model, to bring direct value back to the university in the form of new spaces, new opportunities, and new dollars, and on a timeline of years not decades.

We should each be proud of these efforts, which is one of the biggest expansions of our campus in nearly a century.

SDSU Imperial Valley

More about SDSU Imperial Valley: I am pleased to also share that major plans are in progress for the Brawley location.

As many of you know, we announced earlier this year plans for an Innovation Campus that will house science, technology, engineering and mathematics programming. We have already invested significantly to redevelop the existing Brawley Building and will enhance the site with new spaces for research, teaching and partner engagement and also improve the technology and equipment available. But we have asked the state for a far larger investment in building out a STEM infrastructure.

Let me give you the numbers for what we plan to build there, if funded:

- The building is about 65,000 square feet
- 25,000 square feet will be dedicated to labs and core facilities with major instruments, and include space to collaborate with both public and private partners
- 20,000 square feet of STEM-focused classroom and teaching laboratory spaces; and
- 10,000 square feet of office space

This represents one the most significant investments made in SDSU Imperial Valley and the Valley, and notably our researchers and students, in the history of the campus. Also, important to our region, state and nation, this new facility will be critical to the immediate and highly anticipated education and workforce needs created by the further development of Lithium Valley.

Let me take a moment to acknowledge our faculty here. We have a well established history of accredited programs on the very areas of expertise Lithium Valley needs, and many are in the top 10 in the U.S. Already, we have hugely successful analytical chemists, environmental, electrical and civil engineers and experts in accounting and finance — and those representing many other STEM disciplines — well positioned to drive the educational, workforce and industry partnership potential of Lithium Valley. This project will have a multigenerational multiplier effect and is a much needed, first of its kind commitment to the Valley, where SDSU is the only four-year university within a hundred miles.

To close out my time, this is a mere portion of what our community has achieved or put into place throughout this academic year. I would again like to thank you for your commitment to our research, teaching and service missions, and the many ways you are working to improve our region and communities around the world. I would also thank you for the many ways you support the growth and success of our students — including some of the more recent creative and innovative efforts. We are making excellent progress as an institution, and this progress will only continue as we meaningfully engage and work together.