



## **All University Convocation Final Remarks by President Adela de la Torre - August 20, 2020**

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Good morning. I am thrilled to speak with you today, even if we can't be together in person.

I know these last six months have been especially hard on everyone, logistically and emotionally.

To those of you grieving over the loss of a loved one or a friend due to COVID-19, I offer my heartfelt condolences.

And to those who may have recently tested positive yourselves, or who share your life with someone who did,

I give my sincere wishes for a full recovery.

We've all been changed. It has never been more difficult just to get the job done.

Like all of you, I'm going to miss the simple joys of campus life this fall: Having friends step in from the office next door... Going out for a coffee... and seeing our students.

I'm going to miss seeing the Aztecs rush onto the field for the home opener before a sellout crowd.

You just *\*know\** we were going to win.

Most of all, I miss seeing the eager faces of our full and beautifully diverse campus community, filling offices and classrooms, crossing Centennial Walkway and the pedestrian bridge over College Avenue, sitting under trees or just waiting in line.

These hardships we're going through, these sacrifices, are part of our *obligation... to protect every member of our campus community.*

It's critical to follow the guidance of experts to minimize the risk of exposure.

Someday there'll be a vaccine.

Someday, hopefully soon, this pandemic *will* come to an end.

But we also know the legacy of this time will stay with us. It has fundamentally changed how higher education is viewed, and how our students and their parents engage with us.

It has changed how our students learn, and how we teach them.

There is also the human legacy of this crisis.

We each have full lives outside of San Diego State University. We have our loved ones, our family, our friends. I have my loved ones, my family, my friends. And the effects of this pandemic are far reaching, touching every aspect.

2020 is the year that I lost my only sister, Judy.

The pandemic in this case, created many real and psychological barriers to seek care when needed for something non-COVID related. And her delay in accessing this treatment resulted in a sudden and unexpected death.

If she had been seen and treated earlier, we could have prolonged her life.

You see, Judy was my wise, older sister, the one who knew early on that she had to keep an eye on her impetuous little sister who never seemed to want to conform.

Growing up with my sister, I can easily say that she could conquer any challenge set before her. But what is more important is to know... what was always her North Star... was her family.

She had an expansive definition of family — it went far beyond her immediate family to all those who entered her home.

It was that expansive type of love that still lingers in my heart and echoes in my ears today... It is what fortifies my soul with this loss, and it is what fortifies all of us as we push away the sorrow that we feel when someone we love is stripped from our grip far too soon.

It allows all of us to move forward, to accept the inevitable conclusion of life, when you hunger for this life to linger a day... a week... a year... a decade... or more.

My sister's death this year will be a permanent memory of this pandemic that will stay with me the rest of my life.

The psychological *scars* from this pandemic will linger for all of us for years to come.

But what is important is how we *respond*.

We must have faith in our values and hope for a better future. And we are so fortunate that the values of our SDSU community — courage, empathy, resilience — will guide us so that together we can continue to forge our future this year.

We are *one* university. We will advance, and we will RISE together.

We are fortunate, then, that our new strategic plan helps position us with a clear path to move us forward.

Our name for our new strategic plan is We Rise We Defy.

Over many months, thousands of community members candidly shared ideas and a vision for SDSU's future. After compiling thousands of data points and input from community conversations, the strategic planning committee captured the five key goals for the campus for the next five years.

When we embarked on this journey, we could never have imagined that our plan would emerge just as a global pandemic, a national conversation surrounding racial strife, and a devastating economic downturn began to quickly unfold.

Yet for 123 years, SDSU has overcome hurdles, has risen to new heights, and has defied expectations. This is deeply part of San Diego State University and the reason why our new Strategic Plan bears the name: **We Rise We Defy**.

So today, as we forge ahead to deliver academic excellence, student success, and groundbreaking research, we can look forward to implementing our new strategic plan.

Let me highlight our new strategic goals for the future, which will commit to inclusive opportunities for all.

### **Students at our Core –**

We will commit to a future where all students are able to achieve their greatest potential. We'll help them develop to become more nimble and flexible in all kinds of careers, creating an environment for students to be successful in an ever changing economic landscape.

### **Equity and Inclusion in Everything**

#### **We Do –**

We will capitalize on the diversity of our students, faculty and staff, and our locations. These values will be embedded in the choices we make for our campus and will be visible in the metrics that determine our success.

### **Resilience. Designed to Thrive –**

We will build a sustainable university that enhances our commitment to expand and diversify revenue streams that support our campus goals. We also reaffirm our commitment to an environmentally sustainable future to protect the legacy of the Kumeyaay land where we are so privileged to reside.

### **Becoming a Premier Public Research Institution: A New Kind of HSI –**

We are California's singular Border Research Institution. From the Pacific Ocean to the Imperial Valley our research and scholarship will open and stimulate new entry points for access and excellence that will transform the region and the world.

**“We Are SDSU”**... tells everyone we are one SDSU, building on the strength of our collaboration. San Diego, Imperial Valley, the Republic of Georgia, microsites at community colleges, our Global Campus — we are *one* as a community. And since the historic groundbreaking on Monday, our community now includes SDSU Mission Valley.

### **So now let's chat some more about our newest campus: Mission Valley.**

Just days ago, we celebrated the groundbreaking of our biggest project since moving out of Normal Heights nearly 90 years ago.

With the trust of the voters of San Diego and the overwhelming support of the California State University Board of Trustees, the property occupied by SDCCU Stadium and its parking lot now belongs to us, as stewards for the state.

And as many speakers remarked at our groundbreaking ceremony, the ballot measure that accomplished this was entirely the product of the kind of collaboration we outlined in our strategic plan.

SDSU Mission Valley will expand our educational, research and entrepreneurial missions for decades to come.

With its world-class Innovation District...And new faculty and graduate student housing... we will dramatically grow our research and educational mission. We will also have a hotel and event space to host important academic conferences.

**I cannot overstate: Mission Valley will propel SDSU into a vital, new era.**

At full build-out, the project we started on Monday will allow us to increase enrollment by up to 15,000 students and will pump \$4.6 billion in total economic output to our regional economy, with nearly 29,000 new jobs.

Long before that, a new multi-use stadium and an environmentally conscious River Park will become assets for our entire region.

This is just the beginning of our new future together ...

Together we have shared heartbreak and disappointment this year ...

Together we have lived through uncertainty, anger, fear, and mistrust ...

And together, We Rise and We Defy ...

to make a better future with a new Strategic Vision, that empowers us to create a more equitable... a more compassionate ... and a more prosperous world.

I have faith that we can do this...

I have hope in the future...

And I have love that echoes in my ear...