Date: October 21, 2015

To: All SDSU Faculty and Staff

From: President Elliot Hirshman
       Provost and Senior Vice President Chukuka S. Enwemeka
       Vice Presidents Mary Ruth Carleton, Tom McCarron and Eric Rivera
       Vice President and Graduate Dean Stephen Welter

Subject: University Update

We write to provide an update on a number of significant university developments. As we proceed through the fall semester, there is much information to share and many accomplishments to celebrate.

Strategic Plan Update:

We have begun the third year of implementation of the university's strategic plan, “Building on Excellence.” We continue to build momentum in our three focus areas – Student Success, Research and Creative Endeavors and Community and Communication. Highlights include the establishment of the seven Areas of Excellence, continued improvement in retention rates for African-American and American Indian students through the support of our Aztec Scholars Initiative, and an international experiences participation rate of 31.8%. In addition, external funding awarded to San Diego State University researchers rose 12 percent in 2014/2015 to $120.6 million. A comprehensive documentation of initiatives since the plan’s inception in April 2013 can be found here. For the 2015/16 year, each division has set forth their goals and initiatives, and working groups have already begun meeting.

The strategic plan website provides detailed information about all of the university's initiatives.

Financial & Budget Update:

Governor Brown signed the fiscal year 2015/16 budget for the State of California on June 24, 2015. It provides an increase of $216.5 million for the CSU, which is $59 million more than the May revise recommendation of $157.5 million and $97 million above the governor’s initial $119.5 million recommendation in January. This budget fully funded the CSU Trustees’ spending plan approved in November 2014. The approved uses of the increase included a 2 percent compensation pool, 3 percent enrollment growth, student success and completion initiatives, and academic facilities maintenance and infrastructure needs.

SDSU’s budget for the current year was built on the funding provided in the May revise. The final budget provides approximately $3.4 million more to invest in the university, and the largest portion of this funding will be allocated to support the increased number of resident students accepted as part of the budget agreement.
Campaign Update:

The Campaign for SDSU now totals over $635 million, with nearly $30 million raised during the first three months of the fiscal year. Many gifts are directed to endowments, which will support scholarships and academic programs and will advance our initiatives as outlined in the Strategic Plan. One of the most significant achievements of the Campaign thus far is the raising of $114.2 million in scholarship funds. Recent gifts have been directed to create academic endowments, such as those for the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, the Department of Mathematics & Statistics, and the Center for Teaching Critical Thinking & Creativity in the College of Education. SDSU also recently received the CASE Sustained Excellence Award in Fundraising. This honor recognizes three consecutive years of fundraising excellence and professionalism – placing the university in the company of schools like Harvard and USC – and brings national distinction to San Diego State University.

Construction Update:

The renovation of Zura Hall was completed in August and successfully occupied. SDSU is housing the largest cohort of on-campus students in university history.

The construction of South Campus Plaza is proceeding toward a fall 2016 occupancy for student housing, with retail spaces to be completed for spring occupancy. Trader Joe’s will be occupying the market space, and other prospective tenants are in negotiation for the remaining restaurant and retail spaces.

Grading and foundation work on the Engineering and Interdisciplinary Sciences Complex will begin in November, with construction proceeding toward occupying the facility for the spring semester of 2018.

Enrollment Update:

This fall we were excited to welcome 10,602 new first-time freshman, transfer, graduate and post-baccalaureate students to our campus.

This year’s incoming freshman class has an average high school grade point average of 3.69, an average SAT score of 1118 (up from 1115 last year) and an average ACT score of 25 (up from 24.5 last year). The freshmen class is composed of 60.6 percent students of color, and the transfer class is composed of 58.8 percent. We continue in our efforts to increase the number of underrepresented African-American and American Indian students on campus, and this year saw increases in the number of African-American freshmen and transfers, as well as in American Indian transfers.

We are pleased to see success in our efforts toward improving our continuation rates. One-year continuation rates for all freshmen have risen from 87.5 percent for the class entering in 2013 to 89.3 percent for the class entering in fall 2014. One-year continuation rates for full-time freshmen have risen from 88.2 percent for the class entering in 2013 to 89.8 percent for the class
entering in 2014. These rates are approximately equal for students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds. One-year continuation rates for all transfer students have risen from 89.2 percent for the class entering in 2013 to 91.0 percent for the class entering in fall 2014. The one-year continuation rates for full-time transfer students have risen from 90.5 percent for the class entering in fall 2013 to 92.5 percent for the class entering in fall 2014.

We continue to see improvement in our graduation rates. The full-time, first-time freshman six-year graduation rate is 68.5 percent (up from 66.6 percent last year), the five-year graduation rate is 65.1 percent (up from 59.1 percent last year), and the four-year graduation rate is 36.0 percent (up from 33.7 percent last year).

All of these efforts and successes reflect the hard work and extraordinary dedication of our faculty, staff and students. We are grateful for these efforts and the legacy they are creating for our university. We wish everyone an enjoyable and productive fall semester.