

## **Land Acknowledgement**

### **Dr. Jeffrey Reeder**

California is a singular, wonderful place. However, one of the complexities of its history is that it was established on stolen land. I have been asked to give a Land Acknowledgement for this years' convocation, which I am happy and honored to speak into words, across time and distance, to share with you today.

Sonoma State University sits on the borderlands of the Southern Pomo and Coast Miwok Nations, the descendants of whom today are the enrolled citizens of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. The mission of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria is social justice and environmental stewardship. The Tribe hopes and encourages the larger community to join them in this necessary mission.

A land acknowledgment should not just be performative, but it should call on us to realize and understand that for millennia people have been living, loving, and learning on this same land. Living alongside each other, and figuring out ways to work out and move past disagreements. Loving each other as fellow humans, and loving the land and what it represents and provides. Learning from each other knowledge, wisdom, cultural traditions, and critical inquiry, and learning from the land the power of the natural world and the delicate balances and harmonies found within nature. Mother Earth is angry at some of our actions now, and we must intentionally and meaningfully learn to care for the land the way that our early ancestors did, which is to not only think of the land in terms of its usefulness to us in the present, but also in terms of its past and its future. Thank you for taking this moment to understand and acknowledge our place in time and space, and for your continued work toward social justice and environmental stewardship. Yakoke.

### **Dr. Lauren Morimoto**

#### **Chair of the Faculty**

Good morning and welcome to those of you joining us in the Green Music Center and those joining us online. We face an uncertain future where we need to navigate the ever-shifting demands imposed by COVID. I can't pretend to know what each of you has dealt with this past eighteen months or what it's taken for you to be here with us today. Nor do I pretend to know what you need. Please know that I'm grateful to the students and their families who opted to join the Sonoma State community in the midst of this uncertainty; to the staff who kept this place afloat through shut down, the shift to virtual SSU, and re-opening – all while keeping the needs of our students front and center; to those faculty who spent their summer "off" taking workshops on how to teach online, migrating courses to Canvas, developed creative ways to educate students and sought to create community online; and to the administration who faced an unprecedented crisis and found ways to keep the lights on. I'm cautiously optimistic about the possibilities for this upcoming year. Though I have no idea what Spring 2022 will look like – or what I'll be able to accomplish as Chair of the Senate – I invite you to join in the fun that is shared governance because God knows, we need everyone's hearts, minds, and souls engaged with each other and the university.

With that, I would like to turn the podium over to President Judy Sakaki.

### **Dr. Judy Sakaki**

## **President of the University**

Thank you, Dr. Morimoto.

I once again congratulate you on your election as Chair of the Senate. I look forward to working with you this year. Good morning, and welcome back to campus!

It is wonderful to see so many of you here in person today and to be joined online as well by members of our Sonoma State community.

As we begin our new academic year, I would like to first take a moment to acknowledge the Southern Pomo and Coast Miwok peoples, now recognized as the Federated Indians of the Graton Rancheria, on whose land our beautiful University stands.

I want to acknowledge that our place of learning was once their home. I honor the descendants here in Sonoma County who are working to preserve and nurture their indigenous identity.

And in this place, our beautiful campus, I am grateful to be with all of you.

There is comfort in resuming the familiar rhythm of campus life. It feels good to drive to campus, to be back in my office, to see colleagues just outside my door, down the hall or around the corner. I, for one, love it.

There is joy in in-person teaching, learning, advising, support services and the shared spirit of discovery that is the essence of University life.

And of course, the simple pleasure of being in the same place, at the same time, with no one saying "You're on mute."

I am grateful and appreciate each and every one of you. And although I couldn't say it directly to you, I hope you feel my sincerity. Please know that how you show up for work and the work that you do, makes a difference. Thank you so very much.

But I also want to acknowledge that for many, the transition back to campus remains difficult. These are scary times. I know, I understand. I feel scared, too. While we have made remarkable strides in curtailing the spread of COVID, there still many unanswered scientific questions as new research reveals new discoveries. We are all in this together, and I expect our SSU community to be understanding, to be kind and patient with one another as we each try to figure out how to ease back into our lives.

Let's face it. It has been 17 months of one the most impactful, devastating, and enduring disruption of public life. During this time, we have zoomed together, made decisions, created new programs, updated systems, renovated, and organized. Sharing documents on zoom and changing our backgrounds became common place.. So many things changed and quite quickly, too. We learned to "pivot." Our homes became our workplaces. Our children, partners, loved ones (and even our pets) adjusted to our COVID pandemic life. Grit, my dog, was my constant Zoom companion. It was her job to lay dutifully and quietly, through my meetings. Actually, our pets and babies are probably wondering what is happening, now that we are back at work.

Amidst all of this, hope was a constant. There were new beginnings worth celebrating, like babies being born, marriages, retirements, anniversaries, birthdays were celebrated. And while

we should never, ever forget the thousands of people who died from COVID, we are also reminded – daily - of the triumphant spirit that gave way to heroic and selfless acts in service to us all, particularly the front line staff who showed up for us everyday. So, as we are in this space of Convocations, which comes from the Latin word, *convocare* meaning “to come together,” this coming together feels especially meaningful in this moment.

We are living through the second year of a global pandemic that has affected everyone in our community, in California, this country and the entire world.

COVID has kept us physically apart, through a series of incremental events and experiences that have been unsettling, frightening, traumatic, and yes, even though we’ve grown tired of the word, unprecedented.

While some of you may feel happiness and relief to be back, others may feel understandably anxious or overwhelmed. Our students, faculty and staff who are new to our campus may feel uncertain or disoriented.

Returning and longtime members of the community may be struggling to get their footing.

There is no “right” way to feel in this challenging time, and a wide range of emotions and responses are to be expected.

Believe me, I understand.

Even before the pandemic, we were already a community tested by crisis.

And after each crisis or challenge, we have supported each other with care and consideration. After all, we are a “campus community of care”, which is how I have come to think of Sonoma State.

We are all in this pandemic together, yet we experience it in very different ways.

We are acutely aware of the disparities that create much greater loss, hardship and risk for some students, families and communities than for others.

And we are committed to addressing those inequities as a campus community of care: ensuring that students, faculty and staff have the resources and support they need to stay safe and healthy.

Here at Sonoma State, we also commit ourselves to building an even more inclusive and equitable campus, so that all members of our campus community, regardless of race, culture, language, income, immigration status, the educational level of their parents, who they love or the place they call home, have access to higher education and economic opportunities.

I remain fiercely committed to these values and know that my leadership team is as well. I’d like to take a moment to acknowledge the members of the President’s Cabinet:

Karen Moranski, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Stan Nosek, Interim Vice President for Administration and Finance  
Greg Sawyer, Vice President for Student Affairs

Mario Perez, Vice President for Advancement  
Jerlena Griffin-Desta, Chief of Staff and Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and  
Diversity  
Jacob Yarrow, Executive Director of the Green Music Center

I want to thank this team, and all Sonoma State staff, administrators, and faculty members for your expertise, perseverance and remarkable dedication that you have shown over the past year and a half as plans have been made, changed, remade, discarded, adjusted and made again.

I also want to express my appreciation to our wonderful students, for their flexibility and understanding during this very trying time. Your good spirits and determination to stay on task and pursue your education— despite some huge distractions— is inspiring to us all. It's why we are here.

If there is one thing we have learned over these past few years, it's to expect the unexpected – to trust in each other that we can deal with whatever comes our way.

Over the past year, I was honored to serve on Governor Newsom's Recovery with Equity task force to create a more resilient future for all Californians, by producing a roadmap for California's public post-secondary institutions to recover from the impact of the pandemic more integrated, equitable, and resilient than before—and more aligned with the economic needs of the state.

Under the leadership of Dr. Lande Ajose, the governor's senior adviser for higher education, our Task Force looked at how to close racial, economic, and geographic gaps in educational attainment, which were made so much worse by the pandemic.

I have asked each Cabinet member to review the recommendations and advise me on how SSU currently fares and how we might address any shortfalls. So, please, stay tuned!

I'd also like to share with you some updates on our budget situation. As you know, Governor Newsom recently signed a historic \$47.1 billion budget for UC, CSU and the community colleges.

And that is good news for California and for the California State University system. Yet, SSU and many of our sister Northern California campuses are experiencing a continued enrollment decline in first year students, which impacts our budget.

This means we will continue to operate under our hiring slowdown. Despite our efforts including offering an Early Exit Program last spring, we still need to spend less and in many cases that means having a smaller workforce to match our reduced student enrollment. We ask for your patience as some units are operating with fewer staff, and I know that staff all over campus are working hard to ensure that we deliver the best service possible given the circumstances. I feel confident that a community as tested and resilient as ours can persevere through these financial challenges. I believe in you and us and what we can accomplish together to increase our enrollment, for the success of our students and the betterment of our entire campus. I ask you for your continued dedication, passion, excellence, care and consideration. To help us "think out of the box" and to push yourself out of your comfort zone to help us meet our campus, department and division targets and goals.

In closing, I'd like to share some inspiring words from the activist and former poet laureate of San Francisco, Janice Mirikitani, who recently passed away. She spent her life advocating on behalf of marginalized people, as co-founder with her husband Reverend Cecil Williams of San Francisco's Glide Memorial Church and Foundation.

Shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 whose 20th anniversary we will soon observe, Mirikitani began work on a poetry volume she called "Out of the Dust."

She was worried about war abroad, racism at home and budget cuts at the office. It was a time, she noted, when "everything felt destabilized."

Sound familiar?

Here are excerpts from the first poem.

*"The grass is defiant,*

*Even through ashes, rising...*

*Roots go deep...*

*We lift up our feet ...*

*Lift up our faces*

*To the blue air,*

*To the spacious hearts,*

*To the unknown springs of our souls,*

*Lift up our sight*

As we begin this new academic year, I take great comfort in knowing that we are moving forward together, lifting up our faces, lifting up our sight, lifting up each other, in pursuit of a brighter, more equitable future for our Sonoma State community.

Thank you. And now, I'd like to invite Provost Moranski to the stage

## **Dr. Karen Moranski**

### **Provost/Vice President, Academic Affairs**

President Sakaki, we thank you for your focus on reclaiming our campus, on resuming what you have called the "familiar rhythm of campus life." This fall is yet another unusual one at Sonoma State, a hybrid semester, with 43% of our courses in person, 60% of our students in at least one face-to-face course, and our staff and faculty working both on campus and remotely. We remain uncertain of the future, and we are worried about a pandemic that won't quite go away, even while we are striving for recovery, restoration of what has been lost, and renewed energy.

Last year on this same day, my Convocation speech focused on the impacts of an apocalyptic pandemic, on racism, violence, and social protest. We were focused on what was happening in the present, but we knew we needed to find a path to the future and opportunities for change in the midst of a chaotic world. We were locked down and isolated, but we were also using our imaginations and Zoom to build connections and continue progress towards educational attainment.

Today, I want to talk about the post apocalypse. It can be hard to define what we mean by apocalypse, much less by the aftermath. Let me geek out for just a moment on questions of genre and definition. Defining apocalypse was actually a considerable topic of academic debate in the 1970s and 80s in theological and religio-historical studies. When I was doing my work on this topic in the early 90s, I found the work of John Collins particularly useful. He edited a journal volume of *Semeia* in 1979 in which the Society for Biblical Literatures Genres Project

published a report called "Apocalypse: the Morphology of a Genre." It looked for a master paradigm across apocalyptic literature from Jewish and Early Christian writings to early medieval texts from Europe and the Middle East and defined apocalypse as a "genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality." The definition was critiqued for not being functional enough. The purpose of apocalyptic literature, scholars argued, is to address the present by means of the future and thereby influence the "understanding and the behavior of the audience." As interesting as it might be, I will not spend my time today on a discussion of otherworldly beings, but I do want to think about how we might discuss the present by means of the future and thereby change behavior.

In Greek and Latin, apocalypse means revelation, although interestingly in the context of Sonoma County and SSU fire prevention, it shares a root word with . . . "eucalyptus." Apocalypse connotes an un-covering, an unveiling. In Middle English it also came to mean "insight." It did not come to mean "a cataclysmic event" until the late nineteenth century, although movies and novels throughout the last 50 years have focused on that definition.

Central to formal apocalyptic literature is what literary critic Frank Kermode calls the "sense of an ending," in which time would progress to a natural ending of the world when all would be revealed. Modern and postmodern literature have consistently frustrated this progression to an end by focusing on what comes after the end. That is really what post apocalypticism is: the aftertimes. Poet Wallace Stevens tells us that "imagination is always at the end of an era. What happens is that it is always attaching itself to a new reality, and adhering to it." Imagination, he argues, is what gives us the power to deal with the "pressure of reality."

This year, we have the opportunity to let imagination unveil, uncover a new future for our campus, as we live in the middle of a pretty harsh and highly pressured reality. As President Sakaki has discussed in her address today, the pressures of enrollment and budget and the constraints and fears of COVID make it hard for us to imagine, but that is exactly what we must do this year. As we have taken the first steps towards repopulation, towards opening up the world and the campus again, we must indulge in post apocalyptic thinking. In the midst of what is ongoing - the struggle to get our nation vaccinated, the overflowing hospitals, climate change with fires, floods, and other natural disasters, continued violence against Asian, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples - we must find hope. Post apocalyptic thinking feeds on hope, on rebirth, on reimagining and reframing, and that is what we must do at Sonoma State.

This year, we will engage in a Strategic Plan Refresh process, the primary goal of which is to develop a clear and communal sense of who we are as an institution and how we can use that identity to bring in new students. We can no longer afford to complain that we don't know who we are, that we are all things to all people, that if we just had a brand we could recruit enough students to get back to normal. In fact, I would argue we know a lot about who we are. We are small (relatively speaking), we are public, we are focused on liberal education and the liberal arts and sciences while also offering dynamic professional degree programs that help us engage with our community. We offer a residential experience that is one of the best in California. We serve low income and BIPOC students, although we need to do more of that and we need to do it better and better. We work and live and educate in a special place, and we can focus on being sustainable stewards of that place. We are really good at fostering student research at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, as the recognition our students are receiving in research competitions, admission to graduate school, and programs like the

California Pre-Doctoral Program and the Sally Casanova Scholarship demonstrates. We thought we didn't want to be good at online teaching and learning, but maybe we are better at it than we realized, and maybe online learning can compliment our residence halls and beautiful campus and our excellent face-to-face instruction. Who says we don't know who we are? We need to claim and name our identity and find ways to describe our brand of education, our Sonoma way. The Strategic Plan Refresh offers us the opportunity to think about and describe our potential, our value, and our impact and develop action plans to realize the future.

Often in apocalyptic narratives, part of what comes after the end is a renewed commitment to a set of values. We must deepen our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice. This pandemic has revealed fissures in our society that are far from new-- they are old, painful, and constant. And one of the things we can do is to make our identity as an Hispanic Serving Institution more real, more embedded, using the work of the HSI Task Force, sponsored by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and chaired by Dr. Elisa Velasquez. We can eliminate our equity gaps through programs like TIPS for Justice in the School of Science and Technology, the STEP Center in the School of Education, and the hard, invisible work of mentoring our students from historically underrepresented groups done by faculty CALS, NAMS, and AMC and majors across the schools. We can commit to place by making sustainability and our Climate Action Plan more connected to our curricula and our everyday practices.

Post apocalypticism is also about finding new ways to build community, intentionally, deliberately, and in the face of culture that sometimes demonstrates incivility and habits of mind that prevent us from moving forward. This summer I read Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, a postapocalyptic novel that is, in part, about building community and building capacity for empathy in a chaotic world that breeds distrust and disconnection. The central figure is Lauren, a Black teenager living in California after a pandemic and the general disintegration of society and the environment. Like a Biblical prophet, Lauren knows more disaster is on the way, but she is determined to build "a life afterward" (49). She fashions a way of life, a religion, based paradoxically on the unalterability of change. Change is the only constant: "The only lasting truth is Change," she writes in her notebook. She knows her community must stop denying reality and do something to prepare for the future. "If we don't save ourselves," she argues, "we're dead."

Survival and preparation for a changeable future requires community action, and I would argue we at Sonoma State must act in the same communal fashion as Lauren and her followers. Resources are scarce, people are tired, and tempers are short, but one of the lessons of our pandemic is that we seek connection even when most isolated. Zoom is no panacea, but we have learned to adapt, to use the tools we have to create human connection. We cannot afford to fight one another. We cannot afford distrust. In Butler's novel, Lauren writes "When no influence is strong enough / To unify people / They divide." What we are building in "the afterwards" must be strong enough to unify our community, to realize what Sonoma State faculty have long called "human potential" -- to help our students thrive, to rebuild financial stability, to make progress, to be excellent. We need to figure out what shared governance really means, we need to fashion an environment where faculty, staff, and students feel a sense of belonging and kinship, and we need to develop an academic master plan that blends the curriculum and the co-curriculum, that builds interdisciplinary bridges, that creates a clear sense of what it means to be a Sonoma State graduate. Surviving an apocalypse means you change, you adapt, you break old patterns, and you imagine. That is our task. That is our purpose. I

hope this year you will join with me in embracing change and building connection, community, and a better Sonoma State.

Before shifting to our next speaker, I want to acknowledge the people whose names are on the screen. They are the faculty and staff who have retired over the last year. They have left us a legacy of commitment to the institution, and we thank them deeply for their efforts.

### **Dr. Steve Estes**

#### **Excellence in Scholarship Award recipient**

Let me begin with gratitude. First, I want to thank Steve Bittner and Mike Ezra for nominating me. They deserve this award as much or (really) more than I do. And of course, thanks to the faculty committee for honoring me with the Scholarship Award.

I also need to thank the deans of Social Sciences for their support: Elaine, who made the questionable decision to hire me, John, Maureen, and now, Troi. Their office doors were always open and just as important, they offered funds to support faculty research in the summer!

While I'm on the topic of friendship and collegiality, let me thank my fellow historians at SSU. They are an amazing group of teachers and scholars. It's a pleasure to work with them and to bore them to death with stories of "What I researched last summer."

Let me say one last thing about research. In my field, it doesn't bring fame or fortune. The pursuit of historical knowledge is its own reward. Still, I wish there were more awards like this at SSU. More sabbaticals. More DIPs. More course releases for scholarship unrelated to teaching. Don't get me wrong. I love teaching. Every day in the classroom inspires me. But scholarship (like the kind recognized by this award) fuels a different fire, and I hope that fire lights the way for my students to pursue their own quests for historical knowledge.

Thank you.

### **Dr. Scott Severson**

#### **Excellence in Teaching Award recipient**

I am honored to receive this award. Five minutes is a short period for a loquacious academic such as myself. So let me just hit the highlights, as indeed "brevity is the soul of wit."

I want to thank my many colleagues and mentors, ... faculty and staff alike, that share with me this love of what a public liberal arts institution can mean in the lives of our students. I want to thank my family, who understand that the life of a faculty member is, in a way, a call to service. Their support through these endeavors means the world to me. And I want to thank the students, from their diverse backgrounds and holding their unique aspirations, for those never-ending shared moments of learning, transformation, and personal growth.

To put into words what teaching in a liberal arts setting means to me, I will turn to a quote from the late comedian, actor, and social critic George Carlin. A winner of the Mark Twain Prize for American humor, my students often know of him only as the voice of the hippie VW van in the Pixar movie Cars. His quote is a great example of the kind of perspective we gain from a well-rounded education. I am going to paraphrase Mr. Carlin, to situate the quote for today, and to "bleep" out the curse-words for which he is so well-known. And before I begin, let me point out



that if you follow along with this quote, you are well on your way to knowing the learning objectives of Astronomy 100.

Quote - "There are two ways to think about this existence we have. One of them is that it's [Tuesday] and it's [10 AM] and we're talking here in [the Green Music Center], and [later] I have to leave for [an upcoming school meeting]. Now, that's a reality. But there's another reality..."

"... We're in the solar system of a second-rate star, three quarters of the way out on a spiral arm of an average galaxy in a thing called the Local Group. And ours is only one of billions of galaxies, each of which has billions of stars..."

"... Some star systems are binary, and there could be a planet that revolves around a center of gravity between two binary stars. So you'd have two sunrises and two sunsets every day. One could be a red giant, the other a white dwarf; two different-sized, -shaped and -colored suns in the sky..."

"... And there might be other planets and comets. In other words, [BLEEP] [Tuesday], [BLEEP] [10 AM], [BLEEP] [the upcoming meeting] It's all temporal bull---. I like thinking about being out there ... I chose a life of ideas. That entertains me. That nourishes me." – End quote

And indeed, our shared exploration of ideas here at Sonoma State is what nourishes me. Thank you, and have a safe, healthy, and rewarding semester!

**Ms. Noelia Brambila-Perez**

**President, Associated Students**

Good Morning Sonoma State students, administration, faculty and staff,

My name is Noelia Brambila, my pronouns are she, her, hers, ella and I have the privilege to serve the students of our university as the President of Associated Students. I am delighted to have an opportunity to speak to all of you this morning and on behalf of the student body to welcome the class of 2022 and our transfer students to Sonoma state.

I'm sure we can all agree that we hoped this academic year would look like the normal we once knew. This is definitely not how I imagined I would wrap up my college career but it's not news to anyone that we are living through such unprecedented and historic times. Each and every one of us has experienced this pandemic differently. Some folks embraced learning virtually while others longed for the days where we could learn in person. As Seawolves, though, we are resilient and we are equipped to persevere in the toughest of times.

As the year starts, the Associated Students strives to make life easier for students even if that means constant disagreement with the rest of the university. Our student's needs always come first. We will focus on continuing the support of basic needs services and quality education for our students. In regards to basic needs, it is apparent now more than ever that students are in

need of assistance for their basic needs, too many of our students are food insecure or housing insecure. A commitment to student success and graduation means understanding these goals are so much more difficult when students lack proper nutrition or a safe place to live. Working towards a degree is already stressful, without also having to worry about doing well in classes, balancing work in order to afford things, worrying about access to housing and food, and trying to give importance to your own self care.

Though I'm not nearly as decorated as the rest of the speakers that are here today, as a current student I would like to share some advice that I've learned over the past few years.. As you start your academic career at Sonoma State, I would advise you to take advantage of everything. The experiences you'll have will Challenge your existing truth, will introduce you to your lifetime friends, and lead you to find your true passion.

In a place where there's many opportunities, I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone. For many of you college was a clear pathway; for others, you might be the first in your family to attend college. every single one of you has worked hard to be here so strive for academic excellence, value your education and get your money's worth. although you'll do a lot of learning in your classroom, there's so much we will learn from each other and I invite you to be part of a community that embraces all your unique identities and experiences.

As you transition to a place that is committed to diversity and social justice make sure to reflect on your own prejudice, hold yourself accountable and other accountable.

And the most important, take care of yourself. It's only when you're fully nourished that you can be the best of you. Remember you've joined the pack, and once a seawolf always a seawolf.

**Mx. Sadie Pettit**

**Staff Council Representative**

Hi! I'm Sadie Pettit from the Sonoma State Staff Council.

On behalf of the Sonoma State University staff: Welcome, students and faculty, to the 2021-22 academic year.

First, I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the SSU staff. We've all been working hard to get this year off on the right foot, and you're doing brilliantly.

Let me introduce the elected members of the Staff Council Executive Committee.

Loriann Negri and Arcelia Sandoval's terms have ended. Thanks to both of them for their invaluable service on the Staff Council. Stepping into their positions are our new council

members, Nina Mendia as Secretary and Christina Shoptaugh as Treasurer, joining our continuing members, Chair Katie Musick and Vice Chair Aidan Humrich.

I've been at SSU in the IT department for two years and served as the Staff Council Custodian of Records for one.

As a relative newcomer to Sonoma State, it took me some time to get up to speed on how the university and its various councils and subcommittees work, so for any newcomers, let me briefly outline the role the Staff Council plays in shared governance. Shared governance is the idea and practice that allows people like you and me to have a voice in how policies are developed and implemented at the University. Staff Council has Committee Appointees who participate in other bodies of shared governance, like the Academic Senate, the University Culinary Services Advisory Board, President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity, Campus Climate, and Inclusion, and the Intercollegiate Athletics Advisory Council, to name a few. By connecting to other bodies of shared governance, we stay up to date on topics of consideration across campus, and as a group, we can share statements on policies and procedures from a staff perspective. Thank you to the staff who are serving on those committees throughout the university for your service and time.

In Staff Council meetings, we also connect you to people you might not otherwise meet. In the spring, we had presentations from new deans, leadership committees, and even President Sakaki, along with an update every meeting from Administration and Finance. How often can you rub elbows with big wigs like that? And when you participate, you can ask our guests questions, like: What's the news on a permanent telecommute policy? What are your priorities as the new head of your department? When will we know the results of the Campus Climate survey from spring? By attending our Staff Council meetings you get a chance to have a voice on campus in a public forum, and help us build a community that serves the needs of everyone.

I hope I've piqued your interest. If you're a staff member - MPPs? Student Service Professionals? That means you, too - I hope you'll join our meetings. We've got some great things in the works for the upcoming academic year, including presentation topics on the Stevenson Hall renovation, the new Project Management office, Culinary Services, important updates about in-person meetings and events from the great staff in Conference and Event Services, and professional development opportunities.

All this starts Tuesday, August 31<sup>st</sup> at 1 pm. You can always visit [staffcouncil.sonoma.edu](http://staffcouncil.sonoma.edu) to see our council appointees, upcoming meeting schedules and presenters, and minutes from past meetings.

Staff council has evolved even since I joined a year ago, and it continues to evolve and change in order to best serve the needs on campus. Participation and feedback from staff make us better and better, so I hope you will be inspired to add the current schedule of fall meetings to your calendars. I'll see you there.

**Dr. Erma Jean Sims**  
**President California Faculty Association, SSU Chapter**

Good Morning! Welcome Back to Campus!

I want to thank Judy Sakaki, our Sonoma State University President, Karen Moranski, our Provost, Lauren Morimoto, Chair of the Academic Senate, and ALL OF YOU who have joined us today for start the Fall 2021 Academic Year. It is so good to see YOU!

My name is Dr. Erma Jean Sims. I am your elected CFA Chapter President. I teach in the School of Education.

It is an honor and a privilege to have this opportunity to address you at the 2021 Convocation at Sonoma State University.

For those of you may not know who CFA is:

CFA is the California Faculty Association. CFA is a Labor Union in California. CFA is the exclusive collective bargaining representative for California State University's Tenure Faculty, Tenure-Track Faculty, Lecturer Faculty, Librarians, Coaches, and Counselors.

The California Faculty Association (CFA) has more than 29,000 members in the CSU. We are a Union that protects the RIGHTS of all our Unit 3 Members.

- We also promote academic freedom and Anti-Racism and Social Justice activism, uphold faculty rights, defend financial protections for the faculty, and promote faculty participation in CFA and CSU governance.

As we embark on the Fall Semester, we are challenged to teach and learn in an ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.

We will continue meet this challenge with our commitment to Academic Excellence, Civility, and Inclusivity.

Thanks to you, our Sonoma State University's CFA Chapter has one of the highest percentages of members in the CSU.

**WE Know that TOGETHER! We are STRONGER!**

**RECOGNITION OF CFA ACTIVIST:**

I want to recognize our CFA Sonoma Executive Board, our CFA Department Reps, and all the CFA Activist.

I'm going to ask you to stand and be recognized for your amazing commitment and work during this very challenging COVID Pandemic. You have ALL given GENEROUSLY of your time to make our CFA Sonoma Chapter a success!

Please join me in "Thanking Our CFA Activist" by giving them a big round of applause and Thank you!

If you're a CFA Member, please Raise your Hand. Thank you for your support of CFA! "Together we are powerful! Our members are our STRENGTH! We know that when we FIGHT to Protect "Faculty Rights, Our Dignity, and Respect" WE WIN!

If you are not yet a member of CFA, Please, join CFA today!

**CFA WINS IN A COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT:**

Over the past year, even in a very challenging COVID -19 environment, we have been successful. So, let me Highlight CFA's WINS:

- 1) CFA negotiated statewide and campus MOUs concerning COVID-19 to safeguard faculty health, safety, and rights;

2) CFA developed expansive best practices for the CSU during Fall2020 and beyond that guides how CFA will respond to online instruction and services, while protecting health and safety of faculty and maintaining faculty rights like academic freedom and intellectual property;

3) CFA secured a one-year extension of our CONTRACT that protected our WAGES and BENEFITS;

4) CFA held many important and timely events for the SSU Community. I'll mention just a few of them here:

- Two "Interrupting Racism Workshops" that were well received and very well attended with demands more workshops on this topic and Unconscious Bias
- Range Elevation Workshops for Lecturers to inform eligible Lecturers on their rights and how to apply for a Range Elevation salary increases
- Retirement, Pensions and Benefits Webinars to assist our member in preparing for their retirement
- Lobby Days with Members of the California State Legislators to advocate for more MONEY in the CSU Budget. CFA was successful in getting the restoration \$299 million into the CSU Budget. Our CSU Faculty and Student Advocacy and Activism convinced the California Legislators and Governor Gavin Newsom to Increase the FUNDING for the CSU and Support Higher Education.
- Tenure Track Faculty Luncheons to discuss issues related to RTP and build solidarity among our Tenure Track Faculty at SSU
- Article 12 Training for Department Chairs and Lecturers on Lecturers Rights in the Collective Bargaining Agreement
- Successful passage of AB 1460 the 3 Unit Ethnic Studies graduation requirement that CFA Co-Sponsored with Legislator Dr. Shirley Weber (former longtime CSU San Diego Professor. This was a HUGE Victory for CFA and a hard-fought WIN that will benefit students on all 23 CSU Campuses and society!

\*\*As you may know, we are bargaining for a NEW CONTRACT, and we will need your strong support and membership to SUCCEED!

I'd like to share the CFA Proposals that we are fighting for at the Bargaining Table with Chancellor Castro and his CSU Representatives. We are in the "FIGHT FOR OUR LIVES" to gain a FAIR CONTRACT that will benefit all our CFA Members.

CFA's PROPOSALS FOCUS ON RIGHTS, RESPECT, AND JUSTICE FOR FACULTY:  
CFA has developed specific proposals that advance our UNION'S Anti-Racism and Social Justice work, that will further Faculty Rights, Improve Working Conditions and Workload, and Enhance Faculty Economic Security.

I will share CFA's Proposals. The proposals are not in rank order because ALL our Proposals are of EQUAL importance to our Members.

Our CFA's Proposals include:

- \*Fairness in evaluations
- \*Lecturer longevity and job security
- \*Job Security for Coaches
- \*Workload rules for instructional faculty
- \* Improved counselor-student ratios
- \* Academic Freedom
- \* Librarian flexibility
- \* Increased funding for Exceptional Service to Students

To read about CFA's Contract Proposal go to:  
cfabargaining.org on the California Faculty Association Website. You will also find the CSU's DISRESPECTFUL Counterproposals!

\*\*Now for some exciting News about CFA's Economic Proposals designed increase our Salaries.

CFA SALARY PROPOSAL are:

- 4% General Salary Increases for all Unit 3 members for the current academic year, effective retroactively to July 1, 2020 and for each of the next two years (2021-22 and 2022-23 as well.
- Plus, CFA has proposed Service Salary Increases for Faculty who have not had In-range salary movement for some time, and Post Promotion Increases for Full Professors, Lecturers Faculty, Coaches, Counselors, and Librarians in similar ranks who have maxed in their ranges.
- CFA has also proposed a robust "EQUITY PROGRAM" to address salary "inversion and compression" and address and remedy any unfair wage gaps based on RACE and GENDER discrimination and bias.

\*\* CFA's Bargaining Team is working very hard to secure ECONOMIC JUSTICE and ECONOMIC SECURITY for all our UNIT 3 Members!

Please join us in our FIGHT for A FAIR Contract the Protects our RIGHTS, RESPECTS our Work, and provides JUSTICE for our CFA Members!!! In this Fall semester, CFA will be forming "CONTRACT ACTION TEAMS" at SSU to help CFA secure a FAIR Contract that will benefit ALL OUR CFA MEMBERS!

If you haven't joined CFA, I urge you to JOIN CFA today!  
Just Go to CFA's Website and Click on "JOIN CFA" at calfac.org/join-cfa.

Become a CFA Member today and you will become a part of a community of faculty striving to:

- protect our profession,
- advocate for a university system that works for all of "US" and,
- stands up for our students.

Thank you for being a CFA Member and Activist at Sonoma State University!

And as one of our CFA Statewide leaders always reminds us: WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER!

Have a great Fall Semester and Academic Year!

**Dr. Lauren Morimoto**  
**Chair of the Faculty**

Things almost feel normal. Classes start tomorrow. I'm sitting in front of you as the new Chair of the Faculty, ready to deliver a convocation address. As a Cultural Studies scholar, I know this genre of speech carries expectations. The genre calls for a speech that should – by turns – celebrate weathering the storm of last year; welcome new and returning students, staff, and faculty; validate; inspire; build

community; reaffirm shared values and expectations; and reassure. It should reference SSU's past, acknowledge the current moment, and share my perspective of where we're going. Despite the risks associated with breaking from genre conventions – primarily audience disappointment, discomfort, and dismissal – I am following a different script. I will speak briefly to the past eighteen months and what they have exposed – and how the things uncovered have informed my hopes for the university. From there, I will present three modest goals for shared governance this year. Side note: even with that tall order for this speech, I would usually speak extemporaneously, riff on comments made by previous speakers, and reiterate earlier themes. I'm operating differently because Kim Purdy and the resourceful GMC crew of Caroline Neyman, Kaman Nikolai, and Jerry Uhlig worked to make the livestream accessible. My small part in ensuring accessibility? To provide a transcript ahead of time – so for once - I shall endeavor to stay on script.

I've gone back and forth over what to say today. Since Spring 2020, when we moved all courses and most university functions online, we probably envisioned a return to normalcy that hasn't quite materialized. Yes, there has been progress. Students moved into the residence halls yesterday and tomorrow, some classes will take place in Darwin, Nichols, the Wine Business Center, and other campus buildings. Some call it the new normal, business somewhat the same as usual, but with mask mandates and wellness screenings. Others seem convinced that by putting bodies on campus we can create an illusion of "normal" that will allow us to feel like things have returned to the way they were – and maybe we do need to engage in something that resembles something familiar. Rather than seeking a return to normal (or something closely aligned to it), perhaps we could embrace what is. As messy, unsatisfying, and unsettling as it may be. Truly, I have no idea what will become standard, usual, or typical as we move forward – but I hope that whatever "now normal" emerges corresponds with the "now realities."

During the past year, we've all been repeatedly applauded for our grit, resilience, and adaptability. We've heard how critical we are to the university. We were told we're all in this together. OK. When I hear we're all in this together, my mind flashes to one of street artist Banksy's latest public murals. Large capital letters declare, "We are all in the same boat." Below this statement, Banksy depicts one child looking ahead as though charting the course, another child standing just behind looking back over their shoulder, and a third child at the back of the boat leaning over the side, using a bucket to bail out water from the partially submerged section of the boat. We might all be in the same boat, but some of us are playing captain while some of

us furiously heave a bucket to keep the boat from sinking. Banksy's piece illustrates what folks in the media and academe have articulated; the pandemic has laid bare the inequities in American society, specifically how race, gender, ability, and socio-economic class intersect and impact individuals' access to healthcare, technology, and even food.

In an episode of “Under the Black Light,” a series facilitated by Kimberle Crenshaw, writer Kiese Laymon stated that COVID exposed the historical undervaluing and ignoring of essential, unpaid labor, particularly that performed by Black bodies. Laymon noted that the pandemic highlighted “the politics of humiliation” where essential workers have been served a diet of humiliation from fellow citizens and the U.S. government. That humiliation determined belonging and exclusion, inferiority and superiority, and the value of one’s labor. Listening to Laymon forced me to contemplate how the pandemic hit different groups on campus and question whose labor is undervalued. Who is expected to take risks regarding their health and who is allowed to remain at home? Who gets to choose how and where they will work? I had to ask myself, who have I subjected to humiliation during the pandemic? Whose labor have I taken for granted? Through all these uncomfortable reflections, I heard the voices of my graduate advisors asking, “So what?”

The “so what” brings me to the possibilities for shared governance. I’ve spoken to the Deans – who voiced general support for my, Bryan Burton’s (Vice Chair) and Emily Clark’s (Secretary) three broad goals: 1) build trust between administration, faculty, staff, and students, 2) promote timely, transparent, and consultative communication as opposed to after-the-fact announcements, and 3) figure out SSU’s identity and how that should manifest in how we teach, conduct research, and serve.

Regarding trust: The administration has been effusive in its praise of faculty and staff, for their ability to pivot to digital teaching and providing key services to our students. As I often joke, “Put it in a gift certificate.” Stated more constructively, it would be more meaningful for me to hear, “We know you did a ton of work over summer, converting your three courses to Canvas, so if you’re carrying 11.0 WTU’s instead of 12.0 for Fall 2021, that’s fine.” Though I’m not staff, I imagine instead of repeatedly hearing, “We couldn’t have gotten through the pandemic without you,” it might be more meaningful for a supervisor to say, “You got everything taken care working virtually, maybe we can explore you telecommuting a couple days a week,” or even simpler, “You managed your schedule at home - since you’re not front facing, we can be more flexible with when you take lunch.” Students have been assured that we faculty, staff, and administration are putting them at the center. Would we be more convincing if we responded to their repeated requests to make online courses easier to access and complete by putting them on Canvas vs. using a personal blog and email to inform students of course requirements and as a site for them to turn in their work? Even more trust inducing - build in some sort of accountability. In all three scenarios, we can demonstrate trust in each other and respond in a way that strengthens trust. To show that our words mean something. That we actually see the efforts, needs, and demands we currently contend with

As leaders in the Senate, one of our primary objectives is the acquisition and distribution of information, when appropriate. Of course, to do that well, we need actual information, not gossip, innuendo, or second-hand stories. The literature on shared governance highlights the importance of transparency and faculty consultation, or at the very least, the chance to offer their take on various issues. As contributor to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* Stanley Fish observed, “in the absence of information,



rumor, conspiracy theories, and ultimately real conspiracies rush in to fill the space that would not even have existed if . . . disclosure had been the policy.” Faculty value the opportunity to weigh in – before decisions are made – even if the final decision does not match the faculty’s desires.

To that end, we look to improve the communication between different stakeholders on campus to be better informed and to be better conduits of information. For example, Bryan Burton has already reached out to the Emeritus and Retired Faculty and Staff Association (ERFSA) to determine how to take advantage of their institutional knowledge and experience to strengthen shared governance. He has also met with Staff Council – and we are looking at ways to communicate what Senate is doing in a short and sweet way. We understand that when one group – let’s say faculty - makes a decision, e.g., about the standards and process for establishing student field experiences - that decision impacts staff, students, and community partners. We’ve met quickly with AS leadership to assert our commitment to hearing and amplifying their voices at Academic Senate meetings.

Ultimately, we want to promote a culture of communication vs. a culture of reporting. In her article, “Beyond Reporting – The Communication Strategy,” Lynda Bourne (2010) asserts that reporting tends to be uni-directional, while communicating consists of the upward and downward transmission of information where the needs of the receiver are focused on as much as those of the deliverer. While reporting stops after dissemination of the facts, communicating continues beyond an exchange of data and includes relationship building. Finally, communicating has a purpose, such as call to action, to challenge viewpoints, to clarify concerns, to raise awareness of changes in the system, etc. Reporting can be handled in a memo; communication requires bringing different people into the conversation, listening, and allowing their voice to carry some weight in critical decisions on campus.

Our third goal for this year – determining SSU’s identity – requires input from all of us whether faculty, staff, student or administrator. The current Strategic Plan involved stakeholders from all over campus, who did the hard work of establishing our strategic priorities and core values. In this post-pandemic period, with enrollment declining dramatically, SSU must answer critical questions before engaging in further planning: Who are we? At times it feels like we’re trying to be the Carnegie Mellon on the West. As a good friend here at SSU jokes, we’re not even the San Diego State of the West – BUT that doesn’t mean we don’t teach and conduct research brilliantly or that we don’t give our students transformative experiences. For instance, Biology Department graduate students took the top prize at the CSU Research Symposium this year. A former COMS major was one of fifty students selected for a prestigious internship by the Television Academy Foundation. The McNair Scholars program has produced three Sally Casanova Scholar awardees. We all come together – students, staff, and faculty – to achieve great things. But the question persists – who/what is SSU?

Before figuring out what actions to take, we should quickly ascertain (and I do mean quickly – we do lots of talking here): Why should a student select SSU over sister

CSUs like Chico or Monterey Bay? Why should parents send us their children and finance their education here? What does it mean to be a small liberal arts institution – and if we still want to be that – how do we reframe our majors so that students and their families see the possibilities for a degree in Dramatic Art or History? By the way, I'm not taking the piss out of those fields – I majored in them and I turned out OK, though my mother likes to remind me of my stints as sandwich maker and ice cream scooper immediately post-graduation. If we are selling smaller classes with high level of interaction with professors, can we manage our course enrollments reflect that? What new programs could be offered that would serve student and community interests? What existing programs require reframing or restructuring?

I recognize that these questions make some of us squirrely. But COVID has shown us that we need to articulate a clear picture of what we offer and we need to adapt. We can facilitate change and grow buy-in if we build trust, communicate, and decide who we are. This work can be difficult, but also exciting, freeing, creative, and possibly, fun. I look forward to working with you all – students, faculty, staff, and administration – as we navigate another uncertain semester while also moving our campus forward, whatever direction that may be.