

# San Diego State University Self-Study



**Submitted to the WASC Senior College  
and University Commission**

*January 20, 2026*



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**Acronyms used at San Diego State University**

Acronym	Meaning
AA	Academic Affairs
AAAI	Academic Applications of Artificial Intelligence
AANAPISI	Asian American, Native American and Pacific Islander Serving Institution
AB	Assembly Bill
ADC	Academic Deans Council
APP	Senate Academic Policy and Planning Committee
AS	Associated Students
ASIR	Analytic Studies and Institutional Research
AVP	Associate or Assistant Vice President
AWS	Amazon Web Services
BFA	Business and Financial Affairs Division
BOT	California State University Board of Trustees
C&PS	Counseling and Psychological Services
CAA	Curriculum, Assessment and Accreditation
CAASPP	California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress
CAL	College of Arts and Letters
Cal-GETC	California General Education Transfer Curriculum
CARES	Campus Assistance, Response, Evaluation and Support Team
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CCA	Coordinated Care Advisor
CCC	California Community Colleges
CIE	Center for Inclusive Excellence
CGS	College of Graduate Studies
CO	California State University Chancellor's Office
COEd or EDU	College of Education
COS or SCI	College of Sciences
COVP	Council of Vice Presidents
CSU	California State University
CTL	Center for Teaching and Learning
DLO	Degree Learning Outcome
DRI	Division of Research and Innovation
ECRT	Economic Crisis Response Team
EMAG	Enrollment Management Advisory Group
ENGR or ENG	College of Engineering
EO	Executive Order (from Chancellor's Office)
EOPOS	Educational Opportunity Programs, Outreach and Success
ERG	Employee Resource Group
FASS	Faculty Advancement and Student Success
FCB or BUS	Fowler College of Business
FTES	Full Time Equivalent Students

### Acronyms used at San Diego State University Continued

Acronym	Meaning
FTMS	Full Time Monthly Salary
FYS	First-Year Seminar
GC	SDSU Global Campus
GE	General Education
GI 2025	Graduation Initiative 2025
GLaD	Graduate Life and Diversity
GradTRAC	Graduate Tracking, Retention and Completion
GREW	Grants Research and Enterprise Writing
GSEP	Graduate Student Experience Program
GSHIP	Graduate Student Health Insurance Program
HHS	College of Health and Human Services
HR	Human Resources
HSI	Hispanic-Serving Institution
IIT	Senate Instructional and Information Technology Advisory Committee
ILO	Institutional Learning Outcome
IS3D	Interdisciplinary Studies in Three Departments Program
IT or OnelT	Information Technology Division
IV	San Diego State University Imperial Valley
LCD	Low Conferral Degree
MVP	Military Veterans Program
NACADA	National Academic Advising Association
NACE	National Association of Colleges and Employers
NIH	National Institutes of Health
NSF	National Science Foundation
NSPP	New Student and Parent Programs
OHA	Office of Housing Administration
P3	Public-Private Partnership
PBAC	President's Budget Advisory Committee
PECA	Program Evaluation, Compliance and Assessment office
PSFA	Professional Studies and Fine Arts College
RAD	Research Advancement and Development
ROI	Return on Investment
RWS	Rhetoric and Writing Studies Department
RSCA	Research and Creative Activities
SACD (or SA+CD)	Student Affairs and Campus Diversity Division
SDCCD	San Diego Community College District
SDSU	San Diego State University
SFC	Cal Coast Student Financial Center
SIS	Student Information System
SLOPAC	Senate Student Learning Outcomes and Program Assessment Committee

**Acronyms used at San Diego State University Continued**

Acronym	Meaning
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TAG	Transfer Admission Guarantee
TPR	Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation
TSP	Transfer Success Pathway
T/TT	Tenure / Tenure-Track
UC	University of California
UG	Undergraduate
URAD	University Relations and Development Division
URP	Senate University Resources and Planning Committee
URM	Underrepresented Minority



# Institutional Context

(CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.10, 2.13, 2.14, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.9, 3.11, 4.2, 4.5, 4.8)

San Diego State University (SDSU), founded in 1897, is a leading institution within the 22-campus California State University (CSU) system, and since 2025 is uniquely positioned as the system's only [Carnegie-classified Research 1 \(R1\)](#). With campuses in [San Diego](#) and [Imperial Valley](#) (in Calexico and Brawley; IV), each located within miles of the U.S.-Mexico border, and through [SDSU Global Campus](#) (GC), San Diego State serves over 43,000 students with support from nearly 6,900 faculty and staff. The university continues to see record increases in its applicant pool, with 123,445 applications for the fall 2025 cohort, a 30% increase in a decade (table 1). SDSU has a comprehensive academic profile, offering 97 undergraduate, 115 master's, and 30 active doctoral programs, as well as 53 undergraduate and 79 post-baccalaureate certificates and credentials located across eight colleges. Global Campus is a self-support unit reaching non-traditional learners through mostly online education. The university provides global academic opportunities for faculty and [students](#), partners with local [organizations](#), and works with [tribal communities](#). It is a university embedded in the [community](#), but with national and international reach, evident in its high rankings ([exhibit 1.01](#)).

The university is committed to inclusive practices that promote the success of all students. The campus is designated as both a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI). SDSU earned a [five-star ranking from Campus Pride](#) and is recognized by the U.S. News and World Report as a "[Best College for Veterans](#)". SDSU IV contributes to the development of one of California's most economically disadvantaged regions by providing residents local access to four-year degrees in fields aligned with regional workforce demand. [Global Campus](#) programs in [Palau](#), the [Republic of Georgia](#), and in [Centinela State Prison](#) (funded by a [million-dollar Mellon Foundation grant](#)) expand educational opportunities in places that have less access to university degrees. The university's strong research profile and its engagement with the community further provide valuable pathways for student development. Since SDSU's last reaffirmation in 2016, nearly all metrics related to student success, research productivity, and philanthropy have strengthened (see table 1 on page 3, with additional information in [exhibit 1.02](#)).

Following voter approval in 2018, SDSU began its 132-acre expansion in [Mission Valley](#), located five miles west of the San Diego campus. Building upon the 35,000 seat [Snapdragon Stadium](#) that opened in 2022, and the 34-acre [River Park](#) that opened in late 2023, SDSU Mission Valley will include 4,600 units of housing with 10% of these units reserved for affordable housing and a 1.6 million square foot [Innovation District](#) intended to deepen university collaboration with public-private partners (P3) and help create educational experiences for students. This will include shared academic space with the San Diego Community College District to serve as a gateway for college students pursuing accelerated bachelor's degrees with SDSU, with a special focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. When completed, the Mission Valley location will also boost the university's already substantial impact on the regional economy, [estimated at \\$9.65 billion annually](#), by an estimated additional \$3 billion ([exhibit 1.03](#)).

**Table 1: San Diego State Student Success Metrics Overview**

<b>Enrollment &amp; Applications</b>	<b>Fall 2016</b>	<b>Fall 2025</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Applications	94,927	123,445	30.0%
Total Unduplicated Fall Enrollment (San Diego campus & IV & GC)	35,238	43,042	22.1%
Fall Enrollment (San Diego campus, Undergrad)	29,046	35,283	21.5%
Fall Enrollment (IV, Undergrad)	828	1,131	36.6%
Fall Enrollment (GC, Undergrad)	216	1,263	484.7%
Graduate Enrollment (San Diego campus & IV & GC)	5,178	5,596	8.1%
First-time Freshmen (FTF) Class (San Diego campus & IV)	5,011	6,826	36.2%
First-year Freshmen Avg HS GPA (San Diego campus)	3.68	3.83	4.1%
New Transfer Class (San Diego campus & IV)	3,673	4,432	20.7%
New Transfer Avg College GPA (San Diego campus)	3.26	3.43	5.2%
Average Units, Undergraduates (San Diego campus & IV)	13.9	14.1	1.4%
Average Units, Graduate Students (San Diego campus & IV)	13.3	13.6	2.3%
<b>Continuation &amp; Graduation (Undergraduate)</b>			<b>% Increase</b>
FTF % Continued after Yr 1 (Fall 2016 & Fall 2024)	89.4%	91.2%	1.8%
Transfer % Continued after Yr 1 (Fall 2016 & Fall 2024)	91.4%	93.0%	1.6%
FTF 4-year Grad Rates (Fall 2016 & Fall 2021 Cohorts)	53.5%	62.2%	8.7%
FTF 6-year Grad Rates (Fall 2014 & Fall 2019 Cohorts)	77.8%	78.0%	0.2%
Transfer 2-year Grad Rates (Fall 2018 & Fall 2023 Cohorts)	60.1%	62.0%	1.9%
Transfer 3-year Grad Rates (Fall 2017 & Fall 2022 Cohorts)	82.8%	84.9%	2.1%
<b>Selected Student Resources</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Counseling & Psychological Services Student: Counselor Ratio (first # is 2016)	2,732:1	1,329:1	51%
Total AZTEC Scholarships Awarded	2,366	2,647	11.9%
Graduate Student Awards (available since the creation of College of Graduate Studies (CGS) in 2020)	N/A	144 Awards; totaling >\$2.1M	
Percentage of Scholarships Distributed	65%	99.96%	35.0%
<b>Research &amp; Scholarly Activities and Graduate Programs</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Research Funding	\$130M	\$200M	53.8%
Number of Master's Programs	78	115	47.4%
Number of Master's Degrees Conferred	1,758	1,703	-3.1%
Number of Doctoral Programs	22	30	36.4%
Number of Doctoral Degrees Conferred	142	179	26.1%
<b>Philanthropy</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Fundraising (second # is 2023-24)	\$107M	\$132M	23.4%
Endowment Amount	\$205M	\$495M	141.5%

### Strategic Plan and Shared Governance (CFR 2.5, 2.14, 3.4, 3.7, 3.9, 3.11, 4.5, 4.8)

In 2018, Dr. Adela de la Torre became the university's ninth president and engaged the campus community in a strategic planning process that relied on shared governance procedures to ensure stakeholder engagement. Apart from the construction of the strategic plan, shared governance is an important and long-standing element of campus culture. The University Senate, guided by "[Principles of Community](#)" and "[Principles of Shared Governance](#)," advises leadership on most university matters and maintains the [University Policy File](#). Decision-making is also informed by several campus units including the Council of Vice Presidents (COVP), the President's Budget Advisory Committee (PBAC), the Council of Chairs and Directors, Academic Deans Council (ADC), the Alumni Association, Associated Students, and five auxiliary organizations (see [exhibit 1.04](#) for SDSU's organization chart). SDSU operates in a collective bargaining environment, with [eight active unions](#) representing faculty, staff, and student employees. System-level decisions are made by the [CSU Board of Trustees](#) (BOT) with input from campuses and the [CSU Chancellor's Office](#) (CO).

The five-year strategic plan, "[We Rise We Defy: Transcending Borders, Transforming Lives](#)," was adopted in 2020 and identified five key priorities: (1) Becoming a Premier Public University: A New Kind of HSI, (2) Resilience: Designed to Thrive, (3) We Are SDSU, (4) Equity and Inclusion in Everything We Do, and (5) Students at Our Core. The strategic plan has guided institutional planning and in 2025, following implementation of [83%](#) of the plan's goals, the university launched [Phase II](#) to reflect on and advance [Phase I efforts](#).

SDSU's institutional commitment to redefining inclusive student success – the topic chosen for the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) essay – is reflected throughout the strategic plan. The plan's Equity and Inclusion in Everything We Do and Students at Our Core priorities are directly geared toward facilitating student success. SDSU's "We Are SDSU" advances increasing educational access by improving funding to SDSU IV and by supporting international students and non-traditional learners through Global Campus. SDSU's path to R1 (Becoming a Premier Public University: A New Kind of HSI) emphasizes opportunities for student research and aligns new and existing degree programs with regional workforce needs. SDSU's "Resilience: Designed to Thrive" priority is focused on diversifying funding sources, a process increasingly necessary given state budget and federal research funding challenges. The faculty and staff's dedication to student well-being has been key to the success of the strategic plan: Evidence of that dedication is reflected throughout this report.

Phase II of the strategic plan continues the university's efforts to promote student success. For instance, although SDSU's four-year graduation rate of over 60% exceeds CSU expectations, the university's goal is to ensure that any student who wants to graduate in four years does not face structural challenges. Thus, while the university has made improvements in course availability, as evidenced by the increasing number of units taken by students each semester and graduation rates, SDSU continues to build mechanisms to better monitor course demand and provide more seats in high-enrollment classes ([exhibit 1.05](#)). Based on student needs, [Phase II](#) focuses on growing inclusive and equitable services for disabled students. The university's commitment to educational access remains as it adds programs to additional areas in San Diego (e.g., [Chula Vista](#)) and [Oaxaca, Mexico](#), and develops independent professional and applied [doctoral programs](#). And, even though over [1,700 undergraduate students](#) participate in funded research projects annually (in addition to graduate students), the university is working to expand opportunities for student research to all interested and eligible students and to make it easier for faculty to mentor those students. Within this broader context, the strategic plan has helped set the university's agenda and inform conversations on further improving student success.

### The California Master Plan and Budgetary Challenges (CFR 1.1, 1.7, 3.4, 3.5)

The university's institutional context would be incomplete without detailing its place in the 1960 [California Master Plan for Education](#) and the university's budgetary challenges. Under the Master Plan, CSU campuses were primarily designed for undergraduate through master's level student access while research and doctoral education were reserved for the University of California (UC) campuses. Defying this historical dichotomy, and far exceeding expectations delineated in the Master Plan, SDSU has successfully established robust programs for doctoral education and a strong research profile within a Master Plan budget model that does not fund either, but this success comes with significant funding challenges.

These challenges and achievements take on added importance as national evaluation frameworks emerge to assess how institutions advance educational and economic opportunities. Specifically, while traditionally only measuring a university's research capacity through its "Research Activity" designation, in 2025, the Carnegie Foundation introduced a "[Student Access and Earnings](#)" category to identify "the extent to which institutions provide access to students from lower socioeconomic and historically underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds along with the degree to which the institution's students go on to earn competitive wages" (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Student Access and Earnings Classification Methodology, 2025, <https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu>). Within this new category, institutions most supportive of social mobility are identified as "Opportunity Colleges and Universities". Consistent with California's Master Plan, SDSU is one of 14 CSU campuses recognized as an Opportunity school. Moreover, while all 10 UC campuses hold the Research Activity R1 classification, SDSU is the only CSU to achieve this distinction. San Diego State continues to uphold the CSU's mission of broad access while concurrently pursuing research excellence characteristic of the UC system.

SDSU's other Carnegie classifications help further delineate its institutional context. SDSU holds the Carnegie "Community Engagement" designation (SDSU's 2025 application - which was approved in January 2026 - is located in [exhibit 1.06](#)) along with two minority serving designations (HSI and AANAPISI). When considered jointly, SDSU is the only university nationwide that has earned these Carnegie Classifications (R1/Opportunity/HSI/AANAPISI/Community Engagement) while also having a [Division 1 athletics](#) program ([exhibit 1.07](#)). These rankings underscore the tremendous work of SDSU's faculty and staff and highlight their ability to excel despite a suboptimal fiscal climate. While SDSU's ability to sustain this approach is challenged by budgetary concerns, neither the California Master Plan nor the state funding model envisioned the SDSU of today.

Chronic shortages in state appropriations and a Master Plan funding model that does not prioritize research and doctoral education for the CSUs (see [exhibit 1.08](#) for a budget overview), current CSU funding formulas, and changing federal priorities create an increasingly difficult fiscal picture. Recent state budgets reduced funding for the CSU and resulted in a base budget deficit at SDSU of approximately \$30 million in total over three years. The university was forced to cut \$10 million in 2024-25 and again in 2025-26, and plans to cut \$5 million in 2026-27 and in 2027-28 from base budget operations. Shared with the campus through the [SDSU Budget Hub](#), the university has managed budget cuts by reducing management personnel, implementing a hiring chill for both faculty and staff, cutting non-essential travel, implementing [shared services](#), and deferring or suspending multi-year projects. All campus units received budget reduction targets. Additionally, the university has, in some cases, canceled low-enrolled classes or offered them less frequently, while still considering the impact on students' graduation needs. While the average class size has not increased by much, certain programs have experienced significant growth (see [exhibit 1.09](#) for class size metrics) while other programs have had difficulty sustaining

demand for classes that are required for smaller academic programs. The hiring chill and budget reduction, including that of the [University Library](#) that needs additional resources (see [exhibit 1.10](#) for details), have reduced faculty and staff morale due to working in a restricted-resource environment.

Another significant challenge comes from the CSU funding model. While SDSU understands the CSU must increase fiscal resources to campuses struggling with enrollment, the result is that the CSU system provides relatively lower funding per student (i.e., \$/Full Time Equivalent Students) to SDSU as compared to the mean for the CSU system (page 7, [exhibit 1.11](#)). The system also looks to SDSU as one of a few campuses able to increase capacity to meet system enrollment targets (page 4, [exhibit 1.11](#)). Consequently, although SDSU is not equitably funded through state/CSU appropriations to educate California resident students, it is asked to enroll more of these students (see [exhibit 1.12](#) for other CSU metrics).

The impact of the CSU funding formula on SDSU is substantial. For instance (documented in [exhibit 1.13](#)), the increase in enrollment coupled with the decrease in funding has led to a decline in tenure density (i.e., total tenure/tenure track (T/TT) faculty full time equivalent divided by the sum of T/TT faculty and lecturer full time equivalent) at SDSU (and other larger CSU campuses) while campuses with enrollment challenges have seen an increase in tenure density because they have reduced contingent faculty. Similarly, the CSU campuses that lost significant enrollments (over 30%, page 4, [exhibit 1.11](#)) have better student-faculty ratios. If SDSU were to receive the same funding per student from the CSU as, for example, CSU San Marcos, another growing campus located within San Diego County, the resulting base budget increase of over \$49 million annually (funding difference of \$1,303 per student x 38,283 students from [exhibit 1.11](#)) would mitigate concerns over tenure density and other similar pain points like large classes, library resources, and course availability.

In addition, changes to federal grant policies, student loan limits for graduate education, and recent federal immigration policy changes have hurt the university. Reductions in federal grants have been detrimental to the university's research enterprise (which has a negative downstream effect on graduate students), and caps on student loans impedes access to graduate education. Changes in immigration policies have not only reduced international student enrollment significantly but have also hurt expansion of international startup business partnerships and binational research collaborations. More intangible, yet still significant, students (and faculty and staff) voice fear for their safety stemming from immigration policy changes, resulting in increased anxiety, and adverse effects on student success and campus morale.

In response to these interrelated external pressures—though admittedly larger budgetary issues need to be addressed by the state and the CSU—the university continues to take proactive steps to overcome budgetary challenges. SDSU reserves 30% of non-resident tuition revenue for one-time allocations, providing critical flexibility in mitigating budget reductions when needed or allowing investment in strategic priorities like faculty start-up packages and smaller deferred maintenance projects (detailed in [exhibit 1.14](#)) when possible. The Mission Valley development will eventually generate revenue, Global Campus operations are expanding, and philanthropic giving has improved (SDSU raised [\\$142.1 million](#) in 2024-25 and recently received a \$20 million pledge to build a much-needed [Science building](#)). Faculty success in securing grants provides external funding that helps research infrastructure and offsets institutional costs while directly funding graduate students ([exhibit 1.15](#)). The university will continue to explore ways to diversify its revenue streams for greater financial resilience while it also [lobbies](#) the state and the CSU system for improved budgetary conditions so larger issues like deferred maintenance and faculty and staff compensation can be addressed (see [exhibit 1.16](#) for average faculty and staff salaries since 2015).

## Process to Prepare the Institutional Report

(CFR 1.8, 4.6, 4.8)

SDSU's institutional report was prepared through a collaborative process involving administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Starting in 2022, a university steering committee evaluated the status of the strategic plan and the institution's responses to the 2016 WSCUC recommendations and created a repository of data on SDSU's trajectory since reaffirmation. The committee then recommended a TPR theme, received guidance from campus stakeholders, and presented the theme application to WSCUC. In 2023, a WSCUC committee — divided into writing groups each of whom was responsible for a discrete section — drafted the report. During the academic year 2024-25, a smaller group edited the then 90-page single-spaced draft to a more appropriate size and began, in spring 2025, to circulate the document to campus stakeholders. The draft was made available to the broader campus community for comment in late [October 2025](#) and the committee received feedback from over 225 faculty/students/staff that was then incorporated into the final report. The full process for the report's construction is located on the 2025-26 WSCUC Reaffirmation of Accreditation [website](#).



## Response to Previous Commission Actions

(CFR 1.5, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 2.9, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 3.10, 3.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)

SDSU was reviewed by WSCUC during the 2015-16 academic year. The commission reaffirmed the university for 10 years and made four recommendations (using the 2013 CFRs):

1. Review its General Education program to (a) strengthen its alignment with institutional goals, (b) enhance its integration into the overall curriculum, (c) improve understanding among students as to its purposes; and (d) create an effective administrative structure to support coordination across all academic programs (CFR 2.2a).
2. Develop or strengthen systems, organizational relationships, and governance infrastructure involved in both information technology and data management such that faculty and staff have ready access to reliable and consistent information and shared analytical tools – perhaps via a data warehouse – that are required to support student success, from real-time advising, to the assessment of student outcomes, and predictive analytics (CFR 1.2, 3.5, 4.2).
3. Develop, via an appropriately consultative process, a plan for allocating faculty and staff positions to address multiple and competing needs, among them: a commitment to student success, the enhancement of diversity, support of existing graduate programs, and the development of new initiatives. The team also recommends the university enhance efforts to retain faculty and staff through increased professional development opportunities (CFR 3.1, 3.2, 3.3).
4. Sustain and enhance its progress in the assessment of educational effectiveness through the development of a manageable process of assessment that prioritizes outcomes of greatest concern to the campus, for example, underrepresented student success, student success in high DFW courses, and the quality of high-impact practices. Furthermore, support is needed to facilitate the full participation of all units and programs in the assessment process, including general education, graduate programs, and the IVC, and for the establishment of a platform (WEAVE or an alternative) for documenting outcomes, results, and actions taken that makes expectations and outcomes explicit and public, and that facilitates sharing (CFR 2.2a, 2.2b, 2.3, 2.4, 4.2).

These recommendations, coupled with the strategic planning process, motivated SDSU to make non-incremental changes and create infrastructures that enable the university to adapt to the evolving landscape of higher education and better advance the success of all students.

### **Recommendation 1. General Education (CFR 2.2, 2.3, 2.7, 2.12, 4.1, 4.5, 4.6)**

In the 2016 reaffirmation report, WSCUC recommended SDSU strengthen its General Education (GE) program. In response, SDSU undertook significant structural changes to its GE offerings while concurrently implementing new system-wide GE requirements which, since 2015, have been altered four times ([exhibit 2.01](#)).

***GE and Institutional Goals, Curriculum Integration, and Program Coordination.*** In an attempt to improve GE alignment and outcomes, SDSU formed a GE Reform Task Force in 2018 with representation from across the university. An early decision of that task force was that SDSU needed [Institutional Learning Outcomes](#) (ILOs) to frame any widespread curriculum revisions. Adopted in 2020, the ILOs include student success metrics related to academic achievement and student well-being that signal SDSU's holistic approach to student learning. To determine whether students had degree-level subject matter

expertise and sufficient knowledge of core educational competencies, SDSU mapped GE goals and degree learning outcomes (DLOs) to the ILOs. These mapping efforts help identify areas for improvement to GE offerings.

The university also created mechanisms to integrate GE objectives more fully into the overall curriculum. For instance, GE mapping indicated that 48 undergraduate programs, ranging from Aerospace Engineering to Urban Studies, strongly reinforce quantitative reasoning abilities introduced in foundational GE courses. Armed with this information, a handful of programs are beginning to identify curricular pathways in their course offerings that could help students build on GE competencies and demonstrate transferable skills upon graduation. In addition, SDSU offers upper-division classes that meet both GE and major requirements. For instance, the College of Engineering integrated the graduation writing requirement into senior design courses through collaborative instruction with the Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS). In senior design courses, engineering student teams design a product or system and create product specifications, competitive market analysis, and user guides. While engineering instructors address learning outcomes relevant to engineering design, RWS instructors help students enhance their professional communication skills essential for workforce development. SDSU plans to explore additional routes to encourage similar interdisciplinary and cross-college collaborations in the future.

To improve coordination across academic programs, the university restructured divisions and modified the [curriculum review process](#). In 2020, Curriculum Services transitioned from a unit within Enrollment Services to the newly created Office of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accreditation (CAA). CAA provides the Senate GE Curriculum Committee with information about new GE classes related to integration with the major, unit loads, articulation agreements, and CSU mandates. Although curriculum approval could use further streamlining, the new curriculum approval process provides for quicker implementation of the GE curriculum.

***Improving Student Understanding about the Value and Purpose of General Education.*** The university made some structural changes to strengthen student understanding of the value of GE, although more is underway. At present, GE requirements are explicitly incorporated into SDSU's New Student Orientation ([exhibit 2.02](#)), with an introduction in the Pre-Orientation Modules, included in the Advising Brochure and New Student Handbook, and incorporated into discussions that are part of on-campus orientation sessions for parents and students. The university also increased GE advising through its new [Coordinated Care](#) advising model, discussed in the TPR section.

These interventions prompted the creation of a 2025 General Education Task Force ([exhibit 2.03](#)) to develop approaches for building on these structural changes. In the early stages, the task force conducted benchmarking to other higher-education institutions to identify effective tactics to communicate the relevance of GE to students and useful tools to aid students in selecting the optimal set of GE courses. The task force further organized a focus group with college-level advisors to better understand how GE information is being relayed to students and how students view the value of GE in providing the knowledge necessary for career readiness and intellectual development. The task force then mapped GE skills to the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#) (NACE) career readiness competencies. Linking GE to career readiness aligns with the [CSU Promise](#) that emphasizes clear degree pathways and timely graduation. It is also a core component of the recently launched [CSU Student Success Framework](#) that aims to ensure that every student graduates with preparation for a first career job and/or a clear pathway to further study of career readiness competencies.

***Overall Impact.*** Collectively, these efforts demonstrate SDSU's ongoing commitment to improving its GE program, even as the university has needed to adjust to evolving CSU GE requirements. The establishment of Institutional Learning

Outcomes, better collaboration across colleges, clearer pathways that link GE competencies to major requirements and more deliberate integration of GE across the curriculum contributed to a straightforward educational framework intended to promote student learning. The restructuring of administrative processes has helped improve efficiency and streamlined GE integration into the university's curriculum. In addition, SDSU will continue to convey the importance of GE and develop more effective GE advising practices. Ongoing evaluation, reflected in initiatives such as the 2025 GE Task Force, underscores SDSU's intentional approach to improving the GE program so that it remains responsive, integrated, and consistent with institutional goals and student learning.

## **Recommendation 2. Information Technology and Data Governance (CFR 3.6, 3.10, 3.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)**

The Commission recommended SDSU improve information technology (IT) and data governance. In 2017, SDSU engaged Moran Technology Consulting to provide guidance.

**Unified IT Structure.** The Moran Report ([exhibit 2.04](#)) indicated SDSU needed to expand the role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) to one that provides leadership for cross-campus IT collaboration. In response, in 2019, SDSU hired a vice president for IT and CIO who has primary responsibility for delivering campus-wide IT solutions, providing oversight for IT units, and working with senior leadership to advance the university's mission. SDSU also adopted an IT governance model that integrates organizationally separate groups to better secure campus digital assets, safeguard student and research data, and provide shared services. A key element of the structure is the [IT Governance Council](#), which is composed of university leaders (including Associated Students) and is charged with identifying opportunities to enhance IT effectiveness, codifying policies, and proactively addressing areas of risk. In 2021, SDSU created the OneIT Community ([exhibit 2.05](#)) enabling the consolidation of help-desks. Finally, the University Senate's [Instructional and Information Technology](#) (IIT) Committee helps IT respond to faculty concerns. These measures have resulted in more reliable and consistent information technology governance, infrastructure and access.

**IT Process Improvement and Resilience.** Amid a rapidly evolving higher education threat landscape characterized by increased cyberattacks, regulatory compliance requirements, and expanded use of cloud and data-intensive systems, SDSU hired a Chief Information Security Officer in 2021 to guide university-wide security strategy, governance, and risk management to protect academic, research, and administrative systems in response to growing and persistent IT security risks. Additionally, SDSU's legacy Student Information System (SIS) presented an IT security risk and created a barrier to unified data reporting efforts across the CSU. Furthermore, SDSU's homegrown financial aid systems that distributed financial aid to approximately 60% of undergraduate and 55% of graduate students, were at risk of being unable to grant financial aid reliably. As a result, in 2019, SDSU began migration from its legacy SIS to PeopleSoft Campus Solutions, the standard system used by every other campus in the CSU.

Dubbed "[my.SDSU](#)," SDSU launched PeopleSoft Campus Solutions in 2021. Importantly, my.SDSU improves student experiences by offering a mobile-friendly application and a single sign-on to access financial aid, student billing, academic records, class schedules, and personal information. The interoperability of the PeopleSoft Campus Solutions environment also enabled the integration of complementary software tools, including the learning management system, the student feedback survey platform, the student housing portal, the electronic transcript platform, scholarship distribution, and the student electronic health records system (see [exhibit 2.06](#) for a detailed list of new software tools).

Admittedly, the multi-year transition to my.SDSU was challenging. The system did not include many custom services built by SDSU over the years, on which faculty and staff had come to depend for their student success efforts. Although improvements are underway, challenges remain with class search functionality, the loss of certain custom-built interfaces, and workflows that lack the level of automation as before. These gaps reflect the difficulty of balancing the delivered capabilities of a system centrally maintained by the Chancellor's Office with expectations and needs for local customization. A lesson learned was that future efforts need earlier involvement from additional front-line faculty and staff to address concerns prior to implementation, to ensure more effective change management, and to set realistic expectations for large-scale, enterprise system rollouts.

**Enhancements to Data Governance.** The second noteworthy improvement has been SDSU's enhancements to its data management capabilities housed within [Analytic Studies and Institutional Research](#) (ASIR). Since 2015, ASIR has evolved from a traditional institutional research operation into a decision-support center. The university permanently established a faculty-led Statistical Modeling Group, added three analyst positions from other departments, elevated two existing analysts to data scientists and data engineering, and hired a director for student success analytics. The team grew from six to 11 members including a student intern.

Among the additional resources developed since 2015, ASIR has increased the content and usage of dynamic visualization resources to allow data-informed decision-making and created over 800 [dashboards](#) to provide macro- and micro-level views of success metrics that allow for nuanced disaggregation of data at the college, department, major, and by student demographic traits (e.g., race/ethnicity, commuter vs. housing, gender, first- vs. continuing- generation, Pell status) to help identify predictors of and barriers to student success. ASIR also provides self-service options so stakeholders can create custom reports for operational needs.

In addition, ASIR created the College Insights Reports ([exhibit 2.07](#)), which provided student success metrics for college and department leaders. These reports enabled colleges to create improvement plans ([exhibit 2.08](#)). ASIR also administered targeted initiatives like the [Data Champions Program](#) (2017-20) to provide training on institutional data to faculty, advisors, administrators, and staff. Data Champions then created dozens of reports on topics such as, "What Delays Student Graduation in Engineering?" and "Beyond the Gate-Count: Exploring Undergraduate Engagement with the SDSU Library." ASIR also led members of the SDSU community through the [Chancellor's Office Student Success Analytics Certificate Program](#) (2022-25) and developed self-service training resources, including the [SDSU Data Glossary](#), the [Data Resource Map](#), and [dashboard navigation videos](#) to build data literacy. These data tools have significantly aided institutional progress and informed decision-making.

In addition to the front-facing reporting enhancements, ASIR partnered with IT, Academic Affairs, Faculty Advancement and Student Success, and Human Resources (HR) to develop an Amazon Web Services (AWS) Data Lake connected to PeopleSoft HR data. This pilot served as a proof of concept for moving data from an enterprise transactional system into a normalized data warehouse. In consultation with functional areas, the data models accurately reflect faculty appointments, headcount, promotion and tenure outcomes, and demographics used to develop the public facing reports and internal dashboards. A significant achievement of this structural shift has been the university's ability to drive greater alignment with the CSU SIS, ensuring that campus business processes are harmonized with system-wide standards to maximize data integrity and operational efficiency. Completing this transition was a necessary first step in the university's technical roadmap, as a stable, unified SIS is a prerequisite for successfully rolling out a university-wide enterprise data warehouse. Further, to ensure

cross campus collaboration, in 2025, SDSU established the cross-divisional [Data Governance Technical Working Group](#) to draft Data Governance Guidelines and partner with the CSU system office to develop central data infrastructure solutions.

**Overall Impact.** These organizational and infrastructure improvements have transformed IT and ASIR from service-oriented units into strategic partners in academic decision making, fostering institutional resilience and enabling rapid shifts in response to changes in higher education, like the rise of generative AI. Informed by the [SDSU Academic Applications of AI \(AAAI\) Survey](#), the university created the [SDSU Academic Applications of AI \(AAAI\) Micro-Credential](#) for faculty and students and developed [AI instructional policy](#), included in the University Policy File and the [Curriculum Guide](#). By fall of 2025, 421 faculty and staff, and 3,855 students earned the AAAI micro-credential. SDSU's [AI in Action video series](#), developed by AAAI micro-credential certified faculty, provides examples to other faculty on how to use AI in instruction (e.g. to generate tailored thesis statements or to design integrated lesson plans that promote culturally responsive teaching). For students, starting in fall 2025, completion of the micro-credential is an integral and required component of the [First Year Seminar](#) (FYS, detailed in the TPR section). More than 70% of first-year students enroll in a first-year seminar, and by cultivating AI literacy, SDSU is ensuring a strong ethical foundation in the critical and responsible use of AI.

### **Recommendation 3. Allocation of Faculty and Staff Positions, Faculty and Staff Development (CFR 1.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.5, 4.6)**

In response to the 2016 WSCUC report, SDSU enhanced transparency in the allocation of positions to address competing university needs and increased professional development opportunities.

**Allocation of Faculty and Staff positions.** Starting with faculty, Academic Affairs increased collaboration by adding additional consultations with Senate committees in the T/TT hiring process. This transparency is especially important since the university has been more intentional in hiring, since 2018, by treating faculty positions as strategic investments in student success, instead of simply replacing retiring faculty. The approach recognizes changes in student demands and enrollment patterns, emergence of new academic programming, including master's and doctoral programs, and administrative needs, like the creation of the College of Graduate Studies (CGS), necessitates shifts in T/TT hiring priorities.

From fall 2016 to fall 2024, SDSU has gained 99 T/TT faculty, increasing total full-time equivalent T/TT faculty from 721 to 820. SDSU's T/TT faculty hiring process is centrally coordinated within Academic Affairs and grounded in shared governance, data-informed decision-making, and alignment with institutional priorities. The shared governance process begins almost 20 months ahead of the Fall semester start for the new T/TT professor. Each year, departments and schools, and then colleges, discuss and prioritize T/TT faculty hiring requests through their local shared governance processes, drawing on standardized institutional data such as the number of full time equivalent student (FTES) by college and program, total faculty counts, FTES-to-faculty ratios, and student completion metrics. Requests are submitted to the Provost's Office using a common request form and are accompanied by a brief presentation that outlines unit priorities, unfilled lines from prior years, instructional demand, and alignment with SDSU's strategic plan.

Faculty line allocations are reviewed during a university-wide faculty hiring retreat that brings together deans, Academic Affairs leadership, and members of the Senate Tenure-Track Planning Committee. This retreat is designed to promote transparency and a shared understanding of faculty needs across colleges, encouraging participants to consider institutional priorities rather than unit-level interests alone. Participants review data tables and dean presentations and engage

in a structured, multi-round voting process to rank centrally funded faculty line requests. Voting results inform final administrative review. Following the retreat, the provost and vice provost consult with the Senate TT Planning Committee and review all supporting materials before making final recommendations to the president for approval. Once allocations are confirmed, colleges submit startup package requests and proceed with faculty searches in accordance with university and system policies. A smaller number of hires are allocated directly by senior leadership in response to time-sensitive curricular and/or accreditation needs and grant opportunities (see [exhibit 2.09](#) for examples).

Despite a net increase in tenure track positions, tenure density has decreased by over seven percentage points in 10 years (62.2% in fall 2014 to 54.9% in fall 2024; [exhibit 2.10](#)). While the campus will resource as many T/TT lines as possible, the current reality is that enrollment growth requirements by the CSU coupled with chronic state budget shortfalls have resulted in increased hiring of contingent faculty to meet classroom demand, a situation many other CSU campuses with enrollment drops do not face ([exhibit 1.11](#)).

Staff hires are also allocated in a transparent manner. University divisions typically retain salary savings from vacancies, allowing divisional leadership to reallocate staff positions to meet operational needs. New staff position requests are prioritized by the Council of Vice Presidents and shared with the Senate committee on University Resources and Planning and President's Budget Advisory Committee (PBAC) for input. PBAC advises the president, who gives final approval. Between 2016-24, the university added 165 new, base-funded staff positions and another 69 staff positions using one-time funds. Further, 79 staff positions were added, including 32 counselors and four academic advisors, using new student fees that were implemented following advice from the [Campus Fee Advisory Committee](#), which is composed of faculty, staff, student, and administrative representatives. Overall, SDSU increased non-management staff from 1454 in 2017 to 1861 in 2025.

Unfortunately, the current hiring chill resulting from state budget cuts has moderated SDSU's progress towards increasing staff appointments. To mitigate the impact of the hiring chill on workload, the university is implementing [shared services](#) models and technology tools. AA implemented shared services in the College of Sciences and the Fowler College of Business related to purchasing and procurements and will expand to other colleges in 2026-27. In addition, the university has centralized the human resources function related to recruiting and filling staff positions in the colleges and academic units. These staff realignments have improved the timeliness and effectiveness of business transactions and the university is evaluating the benefits of expanding shared services to other campus departments. Regarding technology, campus' adoption of an advising chatbot, for instance, helps advisors direct students to self-serve advising resources. While still in development, the campus is looking for ways to help staff manage workload during the hiring chill.

**Faculty and Staff Professional Development.** SDSU expanded faculty and staff professional development opportunities through infrastructure changes that enable multi-faceted support. Although faculty and staff professional development opportunities come from all divisions, outlined in [exhibit 2.11](#), examples of two major additions, one for faculty research and one for staff advancement, are presented below. Faculty teaching assistance is housed in the university's [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) (CTL) and information about the Center is documented in [exhibit 2.12](#).

[Faculty Professional Development, Division of Research and Innovation.](#) SDSU increased resources for faculty professional development by creating a stand-alone [Division of Research and Innovation](#) (DRI) in 2020. DRI has [several programs](#) that support research, scholarship, and creative activity (RSCA) efforts. For instance, the [Research Advancement Department](#) (RAD) assists faculty, staff, and administrators to develop cooperative, multidisciplinary, and multi-institutional partnership

programs. RAD manages a diverse portfolio of sponsored projects, helps faculty generate legislative proposals, provides proposal review services (external and internal) for grant applications, and mentors faculty and students. RAD's [Grants Research and Enterprise Writing](#) (GREW) workshop assists faculty to develop relationships with grant program officers, supports grant writing and review proficiency, provides \$3,000 to help further research endeavors, and funds a trip to Washington, D.C., to visit with federal program officers. In 2020-21, GREW fellows received 93 external awards totaling \$16.9M. The collective impact of DRI is significant, with sponsored research increasing almost 65% over the last three years (the university hit a high of \$229.8M in FY 23-24 but changes in the federal political landscape led to a decrease in FY 24-25 to \$200.8M).

DRI also keeps the [campus updated](#) on the evolving federal grant funding guidelines following the 2024 presidential election. Moreover, in response to federal grant terminations affecting many SDSU faculty, DRI secured a \$1M donation from a local philanthropic organization and has repurposed internal funds to provide up to \$100,000 (with a 33% match) to create a [grant closeout and bridge fund program](#) (e.g., ramping down clinical trial studies, writing final reports, etc.) to provide travel funds, publications processing funds, and staff support. DRI's quick pivot to redirect and secure funds has been critical in assisting faculty and illustrates how SDSU's strengthened research infrastructure positions it to better adapt to external stimuli.

[Staff Professional Development](#). While staff professional development is provided by all campus divisions, in 2024 the university created a [Staff Advancement, Leadership, and Development](#) office and hired a dedicated manager to enhance staff professional development. The staff development manager is charged with ensuring staff employee skill sets align with their career trajectories. The manager leads efforts to create, coordinate, and execute learning opportunities to achieve a sustainable and inclusive developmental environment for staff employees throughout the university. Activities include workshops and seminars focused on staff skill enhancement, leadership development, and career planning and individual coaching. Programming is designed to meet the needs of staff in different occupations at various stages of their professional journeys. Other opportunities are documented in [exhibit 2.11](#), including those through the [Center for Inclusive Excellence](#) (CIE) and Business and Financial Affairs.

**Overall Impact.** Within budgetary constraints, the university will continue to prioritize hiring while it also refines its hiring practices to increase transparency. Although progress has been made providing professional development opportunities (e.g., through CTL, CIE, DRI, etc.), the university acknowledges that more support would be beneficial, especially given workload concerns stemming from the hiring chill. While the university routinely funds its Sabbatical A (full pay, one-semester leave) above Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) required minimums and awards about 50% of Sabbatical A applicants, (see [exhibit 2.13](#)) and all meritorious Sabbatical B (year-long at half pay) and difference-in-pay leave requests, SDSU recognizes that an increase in sabbaticals would support faculty development. To better understand staff needs, in fall 2025, divisions studied staff turnover trends ([exhibit 2.14](#)) and that analysis will help direct future improvements. The university is committed to hiring more faculty and staff and supporting those already on campus to the extent feasible.

#### **Recommendation 4. Assessment and Student Success (CFR 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 2.9, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)**

The commission recommended SDSU improve its assessment of student learning. In response, Academic Affairs created the office of [Curriculum, Assessment, and Accreditation \(CAA\)](#) in 2020 and hired an assessment analyst in 2021. Student Affairs and Campus Diversity (SACD) soon added a director of [Program Evaluation, Compliance, and Assessment \(PECA\)](#) to evaluate co-curricular programming. Together, these efforts recognize the interdependence of curricular and co-curricular learning and promote a more holistic understanding of student needs.

**Assessment infrastructure within Academic Affairs.** In 2018, SDSU discontinued its use of WEAVE after faculty expressed dissatisfaction. The university then adopted [Nuventive](#) in 2021 and integrated Nuventive with its learning management system, enabling easier export of course-embedded assessments. Academic Affairs further strengthened assessment efforts by creating a director of continuous improvement position in 2023 and hiring an assessment librarian in 2024. The director collaborates with faculty to embed assessment into courses, develop assessment measures, and implement actions to improve learning, while the librarian oversees data collection, reporting, and analysis of library data. Collectively, these efforts have fostered a more positive campus culture toward assessment.

SDSU's assessment overview is located in [exhibit 2.15](#) and shows that all undergraduate (UG) and graduate programs have learning outcomes, and 91% of undergraduate and 84% of graduate programs, including those at SDSU IV and Global Campus, report assessment results and several programs have made improvements. The Homeland Security MS program, for example, streamlined learning outcomes to align with industry training and increase post-graduation student success. SDSU celebrates assessment excellence via the university's "[Assessment Allstars](#)." The university will continue to strive toward full engagement and work with faculty, chairs and directors to ensure that program assessment is used as a key tool in evaluating program effectiveness.

Beyond program assessment, the Student Learning Outcomes and Program Assessment Committee (SLOPAC) coordinates annual assessment of core lower-division GE courses (communication, critical thinking, and quantitative measures and facilitates assessment of upper-division GE courses ([exhibit 2.16](#)).

SDSU has also prioritized and accelerated the external review of academic degrees and between 2020-25, 86% of academic programs were reviewed. In 2023, SDSU improved the review process by redesigning the [program self-study guidelines](#) to enable departments to "tell their story" through analyses of student and faculty success metrics and streamlining processes for reviews of interdisciplinary programs and standalone graduate programs. In addition, in response to the CSU BOT mandate that campuses evaluate programs with low conferral degrees (LCD), departments and schools acted to sunset some majors, consolidate tracks within majors, and remove structural impediments (e.g., unnecessary prerequisites) to student success. For instance, the BA in Astronomy was refocused to prepare students to take the single-subject teaching credential in Geosciences, and the BFA in Dance was overhauled to make it easier to schedule and complete all degree requirements. Between program reviews, assessment, and the LCD process, SDSU's programs have engaged in considerable self-reflection and improvement.

**Assessment and Student Affairs.** Because a holistic understanding of student success requires assessment of co-curricular activities, in 2022, Student Affairs and Campus Diversity (SACD) created the [Program Evaluation, Compliance, and Assessment \(PECA\)](#) office with a director and an assessment analyst. Traditionally, the assessment of Student Affairs programs focused on participation data and was not systematically linked to outcomes, such as student success, well-being, and inclusion. To address this gap, PECA implemented an assessment plan to measure co-curricular outcomes and align program-level assessments with SDSU's strategic plan. In June 2024, more than 130 SACD staff attended Data Camp, a full-day workshop on planning assessments and articulating program outcomes. Using a backward design, participants identified the institutional goals their programs support, determined whether those goals were met, and what evidence demonstrates impact. Over the next year, SACD inventoried 600+ programs and built a [dashboard](#) visualizing alignment with institutional

goals. These data now inform decision-making and strengthen cross-unit collaboration as SDSU expands efforts to facilitate career readiness, health and safety, and student success.

PECA also oversees the administration of the [Well-being Improvement Survey for Higher Education Settings](#) (WISHES), which has already collected three years of data from nearly 19,000 students. WISHES provides new insight into students' views on their well-being, fiscal situation, belonging, and health and safety, including substance abuse. For instance, sophomores disproportionately report lower belonging and reduced enthusiasm for academic engagement. SDSU used these data to strengthen residential life programs for the approximately 3,600 sophomores living in campus housing and the survey's longitudinal design helps determine the effectiveness of interventions. SACD's data strategy, WISHES Dashboard, 2022-23 WISHES Report and presentation are detailed in [exhibit 2.17](#).

Notable among these innovations is the development of the [Aztec Insights Repository](#) (AIR), which revolutionizes student affairs assessment by fusing holistic student data with the SDSU [SACD Goals Framework](#). Data include demographic, academic, co-curricular engagement, and self-reported well-being via WISHES. By linking over 250,000 engagement records to five divisional pillars, AIR transforms scattered metrics across 1,100 programs and more than 40,000 students into a unified roadmap. This intelligence hub informs evidence-based outcomes, continuous improvement, resource optimization, and has introduced a transparent, quantifiable footprint of SACD's impact on the student journey.

**Prioritizing Outcomes of Greatest Concern.** The commission's recommendation to prioritize outcomes of greatest concern—such as student success in high DFW courses—aligns with the system-wide [Graduation Initiative 2025](#) (GI 2025) that aims to reduce equity gaps and improve undergraduate graduation rates. This prompted SDSU to expand the use of ASIR provided analyses ([exhibit 2.07](#)) to create targeted initiatives for student success (examples in [exhibit 2.18](#)). Students are also provided greater opportunities to discover and benefit from investments in programs through strategic partnerships between Academic Affairs and SACD located in the University Library, which houses programs such as the [24/7 Study Area](#), [Writing, Math and Science Learning](#), [Latinx Resource](#), and [Esports Engagement](#) centers.

**Overall Impact.** Improved program, general education, and holistic well-being assessment, program reviews, targeted interventions, and other efforts have had a positive impact on student success. These successes were documented in [table 1](#), but are also evident in the reduction in DFW rates shown in [exhibit 2.19](#). Since 2016, SDSU has built an assessment infrastructure that, coupled with its data driven efforts to understand student needs, positions the university to continue to improve resources for student learning and development.

## Conclusions

The 2016 WSCUC recommendations coupled with the strategic planning process, new system-wide policies, and budgetary challenges, provided the impetus for necessary changes. Over the last decade, SDSU has adapted and evolved by creating infrastructure to allow sustainable improvement. While the numeric representation of these improvements is documented in [table 1](#), detailed descriptions of SDSU's work to redefine inclusive student success follows as the focus of the TPR essay.



# Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation: Redefining Inclusive Student Success

(CFR 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 2.6, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.8)

Supporting the success of all students is central to campus identity. Indeed, the 2015 institutional report for WSCUC framed student success and achievement through topics that include [research, scholarship and creative activity](#), [community-based service learning](#), and [study abroad](#). While these remain critical to students' educational experiences, SDSU's 2020 strategic plan broadened its focus to include expanding access to higher education for underrepresented groups and, recognizing a holistic approach to student success includes attention to students' mental health and basic needs, co-curricular activities that promote psychosocial development and resilience, and career readiness and professional development. Below is a synopsis of specific activities within the 2020 strategic plan:

- Broaden access to affordable, high-quality education for our region and beyond.
- Foster and sustain an environment where the campus community feels valued.
- Attain a 75% placement rate of undergraduates in internships, research, and fellowships to improve career and/or graduate studies readiness.
- Develop infrastructure that sustains regional partnerships with community colleges, K-12 schools, educational organizations, and industry to promote college attendance.
- Enhance faculty and staff awareness about the availability of resources for students offered by SDSU to foster mental health and basic needs on campus.
- Establish a new multidisciplinary space promoting basic needs programming that serves as a wellness hub and provides personalized support to students.

This essay details the myriad ways in which SDSU has been fulfilling its strategic plan, with specific focus on the institutional efforts around:

- (i) expanding educational access by increasing the pool of eligible students;
- (ii) supporting academic success through improved advising and policy changes;
- (iii) supporting holistic well-being by increasing programming around basic needs, mental health and wellness, financial literacy, community building, and social, academic, and institutional belonging;
- (iv) increasing career preparation and student employability.

## Expanding access and student preparation (CFR 1.1, 2.12, 3.4, 4.5)

SDSU has long been committed to expanding access to education and helping students view college as a realistic and attainable option. SDSU does so by sponsoring outreach programs targeted towards students in San Diego and Imperial County K-12 schools, community colleges, and affiliated community-based organizations to build pipelines of college-ready students. Over the last decade, as documented in tables 2-6, the institution has strengthened and expanded such partnerships,

broadened campus engagement in these efforts, and developed more nuanced programming for specific populations as needed.

**Community Outreach.** SDSU is particularly focused on increasing the rates of high school graduates who meet CSU/UC admissions eligibility requirements and exposing students to university-level teaching and research to inspire them to pursue higher education. For instance, the university makes recommendations to local school districts on how best to prepare students for standardized placement tests, provides tutoring, mentoring, guidance, and career exploration to students enrolled in high schools located in disadvantaged communities, and provides opportunities for students to engage in research on campus through weekend workshops, summer research programs, and faculty mentorship. Specific examples, documented in table 2, showcase SDSU’s commitment to expanding educational access and a broader list of outreach in the local area is provided in [exhibit 3.01](#).

**Table 2: Major Access and Student Preparation Initiatives at SDSU**

Initiative Area	Program/Activity	Description	Outcomes/Impact
Enrollment Services	Local High School and Community College Outreach	Targeted programs in San Diego and Imperial Counties that support underserved communities.	9% increase in local enrollment from 2015 to 2024, with 50% of local students receiving federal Pell Grants.
<a href="#">Educational Opportunity Programs, Outreach and Success (EOPOS)</a>	<a href="#">Early Assessment Program</a>	Test readiness prep and tutoring for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP).	Increased local student eligibility for admissions guarantee (note table 6 for college readiness metrics).
<a href="#">Institute for Transformative Education</a>	<a href="#">Upward Bound</a>	Mentoring, tutoring, and career exploration in target districts.	Increased application volumes in seven of nine targeted high schools since 2020.
Engineering	<a href="#">YSP-REACH Summer Camp</a>	Two-week neuroengineering/STEM research with AR/VR and ethics modules.	Expanded since 2015 to include presentations; student skill-building.
Engineering	<a href="#">MESA Program</a>	Research placements, STEM exposure, <a href="#">Femineer™</a> , MESA Day, <a href="#">Shadow Day</a> , SOLAR Academy, <a href="#">Women in Engineering</a>	From 2015 to 2024, female engineering enrollment increased from 17% to 22% and URM increased from 26% to 37% .

**Improving Equitable Admissions.** For more than 20 years, SDSU has partnered with high schools in some of the most disadvantaged areas of San Diego and Imperial counties through compact agreements that help increase college readiness and then guarantee admission for students who meet specific benchmarks (e.g., GPA requirements, math and writing readiness). In 2023, SDSU refined these agreements to improve math preparedness—especially for calculus—enhancing student success in rigorous courses and reducing time to degree. Updates, listed in table 3, include preferred math tracks and added career advising.

**Table 3: Initiatives for Improving Admissions Pipelines at SDSU**

Program/Initiative	Partner(s)	Focus/Objective	Key Features	Updates / Impact
<a href="#">Compact for Success</a>	Sweetwater Union High School District	Improve college attainment; smooth SDSU admission	Guaranteed admission for students meeting GPA and readiness benchmarks; curriculum alignment	Updated math tracks for STEM readiness; added career advising; new pathways including from community college
<a href="#">College Avenue Compact</a>	Herbert Hoover High School	Improve college attainment; smooth SDSU admission	Guaranteed admission for students meeting GPA and readiness benchmarks; curriculum alignment	Updated math tracks for STEM readiness; added career advising; new pathways including from community college
<a href="#">MOU: SDSU Imperial Valley–Calexico</a>	Calexico Union School District	Access for underserved Imperial County students	Pipeline to IV; targeted support for low bachelor's attainment region	Contributed to record IV enrollment in 2024 of 1,232 students, up from 1,156 in 2023.

SDSU's commitment to increasing equitable access is also evident in its new (deployed in 2020 for fall 2021 applicants) [multifactor admissions review model](#), which considers a student's achievements within the context of available opportunities as a way to break the cycle of lower income areas producing fewer college applicants and graduates. A cross-division Enrollment Management Advisory Group recommended combining traditional metrics like GPA with a deeper review of coursework in relation to a student's planned area of study. The new model considers units earned in advanced classes but, because not all high school students have access to advanced classes, also caps the number of these units considered to remain equity-minded. In 2025, the first class of students admitted through the multifactor review model set a new institutional record with a 4-year graduation rate of 62%. Because continuation rates and student GPAs have progressively increased since the new admissions model was deployed, the university is optimistic graduation rates will continue to increase.

**Transfer Pathways.** SDSU has taken a similar approach to transfer admissions by providing access to SDSU facilities and faculty to encourage applications, providing admissions counseling, and creating programs to help community college students successfully transition to campus. While the university has long offered a [Transfer Admissions Guarantee \(TAG\)](#) program for students completing coursework at local community colleges, SDSU realized the program did not provide enough guidance to students because they consistently made errors in major preparation course selection and were thus ineligible for the TAG program. To reduce errors, the university now identifies prospective transfer students earlier in the admissions process and provides opportunities for advising and cross-enrollment, as documented in table 4.

**Table 4: Local Community College Transfer Pathways**

Program	Community College Partners	Overview	# of Students
<a href="#">STEM Pathways</a>	Southwestern College and San Diego City College	Guaranteed admission into a subset of STEM majors; research courses and paid research experiences.	12-22 new students per year
<a href="#">NextGen</a> Smoke and Vape Free Latinx Scholars Program	Southwestern College	Guaranteed admission for students engaged in the study of tobacco-related health disparities.	5-10 new students per year
<a href="#">Kumeyaay Community College Admissions Guarantee</a>	Kumeyaay Community College	Guaranteed admission for students who have completed at least 20 academic units at KCC and meet minimum transfer admission requirements.	5-10 new students per year (expected in future years)
<a href="#">Transfer Success Pathway (TSP)</a>	All California Community Colleges	High School graduates sign contracts prior to starting community college studies with a transfer guarantee to SDSU if they meet program specific requirements within three years.	675 students with contracts since program began in 2023
<a href="#">EOPOS</a>	Economically disadvantaged Students	Includes an EOP Transfer Bridge Program, an intensive transitional program offered during the summer prior to the beginning of the fall semester to newly admitted EOPOS students transferring from community colleges.	150-200 new students per year

**Outcomes.** SDSU's efforts to expand educational access and student preparation have been beneficial as the university continues to see increases in the academic qualifications and local residency of its undergraduate students. Total enrollment, enrollment from local high schools, and student preparation metrics have improved from 2015 as summarized in table 5.

**Table 5: Enrollment and Preparation Metrics**

Enrollment and Preparation Metric	2015-16	2024-25	Change %
Total First-Year Enrollment	5,229	6,634	+27%
First-Year Enrollment from Local High Schools	1,673	2,271	+36%
Total Transfer Enrollment	3,463	4,167	+20%
Transfer Enrollment from Local Community Colleges	2,496	2,662	+7%
Total URM Undergraduate Enrollment	10,245	13,964	+36%
Incoming High School GPA (First-Year Students)	3.69	3.84	+0.15
Incoming College GPA (Transfers)	3.23	3.44	+0.21

Moreover, the broader impacts of partnerships across the region are also showing positive trends. Within San Diego and Imperial Counties, there is a modest increase in the percentage of students meeting CSU/UC eligibility, as evident in table 6. Although, of course, not all these improvements can be attributed solely to SDSU's efforts, the university is nonetheless proud to play a role in helping improve access to four-year institutions.

Table 6: Improvements in College Readiness Metrics Across Local Region

County	% of High School Graduates Meeting CSU/UC Eligibility		% of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged High School Graduates Meeting CSU/UC Eligibility	
	2016-17	2023-24	2016-17	2023-24
San Diego	58.1%	59.5%	47.5%	49.8%
Imperial	30.9%	37.1%	25.9%	32.9%

**Looking Ahead.** San Diego State’s, and indeed the CSU’s, firmly held belief that all students wishing to pursue higher education should have the opportunity to do so, compel the university to continue to refine current practices and explore new opportunities to increase access. For instance, the university is aware that it could do a better job of providing information on community college course equivalencies to potential transfer students, and thus, in 2025, using one-time funding from the CSU, the university created articulation agreements with more southern California community colleges and is working on expanding such agreements to schools north of Los Angeles. SDSU Mission Valley continues to move forward through P3s, allowing the university to attract investment in new infrastructure and academic facilities. In July 2025, SDSU and the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) signed a landmark [Memorandum of Understanding](#) to build a shared academic facility at the SDSU Mission Valley campus. SDCCD’s partnership helps alleviate some of SDSU’s space and funding challenges while democratizing access to educational and workforce development opportunities to eligible SDCCD students who are guaranteed a seamless transfer to SDSU. Similarly, SDSU’s [partnership](#) with the City of Chula Vista allows it to lease more than 7,000 square feet in the Millenia Library for \$1 annually, enabling SDSU to bring higher education opportunities, like nursing classes, to the region. SDSU’s [Oaxaca Center for Mesoamerican Studies](#), located in Oaxaca, Mexico, provides indigenous language instruction in Mixtec and Zapotec and an ethnographic field school to engage students in research on topics like traditional food systems and community health. These strategic initiatives, detailed in [exhibit 1.03](#), underscore SDSU’s commitment to educational access but highlight the need for new programming to be formed in partnership with others to enable program sustainability.

**Academic Student Success (CFR 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 2.6, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 3.1, 3.2, 3.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5)**

Once students are admitted to SDSU, the university’s priority is to ensure they succeed. SDSU regularly evaluates its student services through extensive feedback mechanisms, including strategic planning conversations, program reviews and assessment, graduation initiatives, and analysis of student success metrics. This feedback helped motivate numerous structural interventions (documented in [exhibit 3.02](#)). Highlighted below are the new undergraduate Coordinated Care advising model and adjustments to academic policy.

**Equity-Minded Advising.** Student feedback through a 2021 Associated Students survey highlighted their strong preference for personalized academic advising and students’ discouragement with access to advising. At the time, academic advising was distributed between six full-time equivalent personnel in an Office of Advising and Evaluations as well as staff and faculty advisors situated across academic units, leading to a student experience of being “bounced” from office to office. In response to this need and to help the campus reach new retention and graduation rate goals set by the CSU system via

its GI 2025 initiative, in 2021, SDSU hired 20 additional major advisors and implemented a “Campuswide Coordinated Plan for Student Success” ([exhibit 3.03](#)), a joint effort by Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and Campus Diversity. The Campuswide Coordinated plan assigns all first- and second-year undergraduates a Coordinated Care Advisor (CCA) who helps students transition to the university, develop graduation plans, navigate university procedures, and serve as their main contact for advising. In addition, the Coordinated Care plan places most first-year undergraduate students in a one-unit first-year seminar (FYS) to aid development of student success tools in a small cohort, collaborative seminar designed to foster a sense of social and academic belonging. Many of these seminars take place either in the context of specific undergraduate degree programs (e.g., Engineering, Astronomy) or SDSU’s [10 community centers](#) (i.e., [APIDA Center](#), [Gus and Emma Thompson Black Resource Center](#), [Center for Intercultural Relations](#), [Cross Cultural Center-Imperial Valley](#), [Latinx Resource Center](#), [Native Resource Center](#), [Pride Center](#), [Project Rebound](#), [Monarch Unity Resource Center](#), and [Women’s Resource Center](#)), which also provide opportunities for community building. Students in their junior year transition to an advisor in their major academic department or school, who advises on upper-division course selection and degree completion.

The new advising infrastructure allows SDSU to conduct proactive outreach to students in academic precarity. This innovative approach was first piloted in fall 2020, in response to concerns about first-year student success during the COVID-19 pandemic. Academic Affairs collaborated with IT to develop a weekly roster of first-year students who had not logged into their remote course during the prior seven days and then deployed a team of advisors to check with these students by phone. Another use of proactive outreach was initiated in November 2021 when SACD reached out to more than 1,500 first- and second-year students who had not enrolled in spring classes, worked with students to understand why they were not enrolled, helped them develop a plan, and connected them to appropriate resources (e.g., academic advisors, financial aid counselors, etc.). Since these COVID-era pilots, proactive individualized outreach to students whose records evidence retention precarity (including underenrollment, late enrollment, holds, DFWs, academic notice, etc.) has become a cornerstone of the campus-wide approach. Every semester, campus offices across divisions undertake email, phone, and text outreach to ensure that students are connected with helpful information (including video tutorials) and resources. For students who do not register for classes, advisors provide information on the campus’ Leave of Absence guidelines. During a student’s leave, advisors will connect them to campus resources to help them develop a re-enrollment plan; students who do not return are contacted by the Student Success Help Desk to assess exit reasons. Students on academic notice are pre-enrolled into a one-unit, small group [Bounce Back](#) seminar, which focuses on building resilience skills, led by an individual from Counseling and Psychological Services (C&PS).

Proactive individualized outreach has also been used to ensure that successfully enrolled students are making intentional progress towards a meaningful degree. Advisors in Faculty Advancement and Student Success have anchored regular outreach to students with more than 120 semester units, who remain in premajor status, and students with more than 70 semester units, who remain “Undeclared.” The [Undeclared Success Program](#) team provides targeted year-round student outreach and partners with academic departments to connect students to major and college resources. The program has been impactful: from fall 2021 to fall 2023, the number of students who held 70+ units in undeclared status decreased by 47%. The Coordinated Care proactive advising structure also allowed SDSU to take full advantage of the CSU Chancellor’s Office [Re-enrollment Initiative](#), budgeted from 2022-2025. The re-enrollment initiative was aimed at getting undergraduates who had stopped attending to return and finish their degrees. With the CSU system funding, SDSU re-enrolled 142 students through individualized outreach and awarded \$770,411 in scholarship funds.

Advising efforts are bolstered by SDSU's implementation of [SDSU Navigate](#) in 2020. Staff and faculty across campus use Navigate to communicate with undergraduates via email and text, schedule and manage student appointments, document interactions with students, refer students for services or care, and access reporting and data analytics. Undergraduate students use Navigate to schedule appointments, review information provided by their advisors, and connect with advising, financial aid, career services, health services, and tutoring services. This integrated approach enables faculty and staff to use shared data and reporting tools to monitor student progress and respond more proactively to student needs.

While acknowledging the positive progress already made, the scalability of high-touch advising services in a resourced-constrained budget environment remains a challenge. While not a substitute for additional staff advisors, SDSU has funded a supplemental advising help desk and created AI tools to aid students. To further help alleviate resource challenges, Academic Affairs leaders are meeting with academic departments to evaluate which administrative issues drive more students to seek 1-1 advising meetings (from registration obstacles to articulation questions), and to develop systemic solutions to the core challenges that students face.

During the 2024-25 academic year, the university engaged in an assessment of the Coordinated Care program through a Chancellor's Office-funded and National Academic Advising Association (NACADA)-facilitated "Excellence in Academic Advising" evaluation. Stakeholders wrote a self-study, received a report by NACADA consultants ([exhibit 3.04](#)), and created an action plan for improvement grounded in NACADA's recommendations, including expanding the use of digital tools and holding regular meetings with advisors and other university leaders. One of the findings highlighted the need for updates to the undergraduate advising leadership infrastructure, which led to the convening, in Summer 2025, of a vice provost-led working group of AVPs and deans who work closely with the advising community. As the working group continues through 2026, it has clarified the roles of assistant deans and established new responsibilities for college-based "lead advisors" to guide advising. SDSU is also adding a policy file-based Advising Council and advisor certification program through the Center for Teaching and Learning. The digital planner, which uses AI algorithms to recommend course sequences, is in the final stages of development, with an anticipated launch date early in the 2026-27 academic year. A cross-college task force made up of advisors was established in October 2025 to test the tool and initiate a campus adoption plan.

***Examining Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Policies.*** Over the last decade, the university analyzed policies that were unintentionally hindering student progress to degree and made changes to these policies. Overall, while many of these individual adjustments could be considered small interventions, the cumulative impact has reduced student barriers to success. Table 7 summarizes the policy changes discussed in this section while [exhibit 3.05](#) documents other process improvements.

**Table 7: Select SDSU Policy Changes for Student Success**

Change Area	Students Impacted	Summary of Change	Implementation Term	Impact
Timing of Tuition Payment	Graduate & Undergraduate	Transitioned to a post-pay tuition model	Fall 2022	Mitigated financial barriers for students
Registration Timeline	Graduate & Undergraduate	Advanced fall registration to April	2017-18	Increased opportunity for consultation with advisors before registration
Course Schedule Planning	Graduate & Undergraduate	Release full academic year schedules prior to spring registration	2017-18	Enhanced students' ability to plan and improved course availability management
General Education Policy	Undergraduate	Permitted enrollment in upper-division GE courses during the 60-unit-reaching semester	Fall 2025	Provided increased flexibility in academic planning and scheduling
American Institutions	Undergraduate	Permitted use of American Institution course from different majors	Fall 2024	Provided increased flexibility in academic planning and scheduling
Writing Requirement	Undergraduate	Integrated upper-division writing courses into major curricula	Fall 2022	Improved time to graduation while ensuring tailored writing instruction
Attendance & Religious Observance	Graduate & Undergraduate	Increased procedural fairness to accommodate religious observance	Fall 2023	Promoted student-centered practices and inclusive learning environments
Academic Standing Terminology	Undergraduate	Reframed "academic probation" to "academic notice"	Spring 2024	Normalized help-seeking behavior and reduced stigma
Graduation Process	Undergraduate	Instituted single-fee model and shifted fee collection to post-90 units	Fall 2019 / Fall 2025	Reduced financial burden and improved identification of students approaching graduation

For instance, prior to fall 2022, undergraduate and graduate students were required to pay a portion of their semester's tuition before they could register for classes. Students unable to make a payment often could not register for classes, which created anxiety and delayed graduation. More important, the prepay requirement disproportionately impacted lower socio-economic, Pell-eligible, and first-generation students. Graduate students funded by tuition waivers were also required to make a tuition payment and then had to wait for a refund, creating a significant fiscal burden. To mitigate these issues, SDSU moved to a [post-pay system](#), allowing students to register for classes before paying tuition.

Similarly, prior to AY 2017-18, continuing students registered for fall classes staggered throughout the summer when faculty advisors were unavailable to help with course selection. Fall registration now happens in April of the prior academic year for continuing students, allowing them to seek advice when registering for classes. The university also changed the timeline for production of academic course schedules to ensure that a full year's course offerings are published before April registration, allowing students to make more informed course decisions and making it easier for SDSU to meet course demands ([exhibit 1.05](#)).

The university also initiated several policy updates geared toward reducing small pressure points that can hinder success. SDSU reexamined the sequencing of its American Institutions classes and allowed students to take upper-division GE classes earlier in their college careers: both changes provide students greater flexibility in course selection. In addition, before 2021, SDSU allowed students to test out of the upper-division writing requirement. However, a new CSU policy prohibited the use of high-stakes exams, like SDSU's writing exam, and thus the university initially adjusted by requiring all students take an upper-division writing class to fulfil the writing requirement. However, careful analysis indicated that for some students, this practice delayed graduation. SDSU responded by building upper-division writing classes into majors, thus helping progress to degree and providing tailored writing instruction.

In addition to the adjustments noted above, the Senate changed policy to provide students more due process before they are dropped from classes for non-attendance and more opportunities to inform faculty of their excused absences due to religious observances. SDSU updated its "academic probation" nomenclature to "academic notice" for undergraduate students to destigmatize and normalize help seeking. Beginning in fall 2019, SDSU streamlined the graduation application process and implemented a single graduation fee. An additional improvement was implemented in 2025-26, with undergraduate students paying the graduation fee in the semester after earning 90 units, allowing them to utilize residual financial aid to help cover the cost. Furthermore, SDSU can now identify undergraduate students who can potentially graduate, giving advisors an opportunity to recommend courses that can be taken either during the summer or winter sessions to reduce the time to degree.

**Graduate Student Policies.** The creation in 2020 of a stand-alone [College of Graduate Studies](#) (CGS) was motivated by the university's recognition that it needed to do more to support graduate education. Since its creation, CGS has identified gaps and implemented several improvements, which include aligning responsibilities for stateside employment to best match hiring classifications (which led to an increase in monthly pay for most), providing part-time in-state tuition waivers for teaching associates (TAs, with approved appointment levels), providing waivers for the out-of-state/international fee to TAs and doctoral students, and increasing stipends for competitive university graduate fellowships. CGS built out a [Graduate Student Employment website](#) to provide up to date information for academic student employees and faculty/graduate advisors and hired a graduate employment specialist to help units confirm graduate student employment eligibility, direct student waivers to the correct billing office, and ensure adherence to contract requirements. The university passed policies to improve the graduate environment, mentoring, and program structure ([exhibit 3.05](#)), and launched regular outreach to graduate advisors and faculty who mentor students. The Graduate Council also prepared guidance documents ([exhibit 3.06](#)) to help foster a supportive environment for graduate student success and promote high standards for graduate student research and creative activities. These changes are summarized in table 8.

**Table 8: Graduate Education Enhancements at SDSU**

Change Area	Summary of Change	Impact
Graduate Student Funding	Hired a <a href="#">graduate employment</a> specialist. Aligned workload for TAs. Added Tuition Waivers for TAs. Added Fee Waivers for TAs and out-of-state and international doctoral students. Increased stipends for competitive fellowships. Secured funding for mini-grants to support the completion of graduate culminating experiences ( <a href="#">CORE fellowship</a> ).	Enhanced financial equity and competitiveness of <a href="#">graduate support packages</a> and remove financial barriers to the completion of graduate culminating experiences, thus improving time to degree.
Graduate Student Health Insurance (GSHIP)	Introduced a university negotiated plan for all graduate students for health, vision, and dental coverage to support their health and wellness throughout their course of study.	Provides students support in either obtaining affordable healthcare or verifying existing health insurance.
Program Policy and Structure	Introduced standardized guidance documents for master's and doctoral culminating experiences, clarifying roles and expectations for students and faculty	Fostered shared accountability and improved research quality and time to degree.
Enrollment Continuity	Reaffirmed continuous enrollment policy following system transition; launched outreach to clarify requirements for maintaining matriculation.	Reduced administrative discontinuations and reinforced enrollment compliance.
Advising and Communication	Implemented targeted workshops, town halls, and individualized 1:1 doctoral director support for graduate program leadership.	Strengthened advising practices towards student progress and stakeholder communication.
Faculty Mentorship Development	Established a faculty working group to recommend university-wide mentoring frameworks, resources, and tool-kits.	Expected enhancement of faculty mentorship and graduate student support.

**Undergraduate and Graduate Outcomes.** The cumulative effect of these, and other interventions documented in [exhibit 3.05](#), have helped improve SDSU student success metrics (see [table 1](#)). SDSU also exceeded all system-wide GI 2025 targets for first-time, full-time freshmen and for transfer students. As some campuses were given individual, higher goals, SDSU exceeded its campus-specific targets, documented in table 9. The six-year graduation rate for the 2017 first-time, full-time freshman cohort was 78.3%, the highest rate ever. Also noted in table 9, equity gaps have decreased. Indeed, in 2020, [Hispanic Outlook on Education](#) ranked SDSU 16th nationally for the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to Hispanic/Latinx students, and in 2021, the university received the Seal of Excelencia as [national recognition](#) for its commitment to closing equity gaps for Latinx students, and then renewed again in 2024.

Table 9: Undergraduate Student Success Metrics (2015-2024)

Graduation Rate	Cohort	Outcome	Impact
Four-Year Graduation Rate: First-Time Freshmen	Fall 2020	60.9% (Target: 54%)	Exceeded both CSU system and campus-specific GI 2025 goals
Two-Year Graduation Rate: Upper-Division Transfers	Fall 2021	59.1% (Target: 51%)	Surpassed campus-specific GI 2025 targets
Six-Year Graduation Rate: First-Time Freshmen	Fall 2017	78.3%	Highest rate in SDSU history
Equity Gap: URM vs. Non-URM (Six-Year Grad Rate)	Fall 2017	Decreased three percentage points	Narrowed equity gap significantly
Equity Gap: Pell vs. Non-Pell (Six-Year Grad Rate)	Fall 2017	Decreased six percentage points	Reduced disparity across socioeconomic groups
Four-Year Graduation Rate Fall 2019: Transfers	Fall 2019	87.9%	Strong completion outcomes

Student success metrics for graduate students also show improvement, documented in table 10. Average GPA at graduation and time to degree has improved for master’s and doctoral students - including for first-generation and URM students.



**Table 10: Graduate Student Success Metrics (2015-2024)**

Focus Area	2015-16	2023-24	Impact
Average GPA at Graduation (Master's)	3.65	3.77	Improved academic performance among master's students
Average GPA at Graduation (Doctoral)	3.75	3.71	Sustained high academic performance
Time to Degree (Master's)	5.5 semesters	4.8 semesters	Accelerated degree completion
Time to Degree (Doctoral)	9.1 semesters	8.4 semesters	Improved program efficiency
Time to Degree (First-Gen Master's)	5.5 semesters	4.7 semesters	Substantial reduction in completion time
Time to Degree (First-Gen Doctoral)	8.7 semesters	7.8 semesters	Faster progression for first-gen doctoral students
GPA at Graduation (First-Gen Master's)	3.66	3.79	Significant academic gains for first-gen master's students
Time to Degree (URM Master's)	5.6 semesters	4.8 semesters	Reduced time to degree for URM students
GPA at Graduation (URM Master's)	3.67	3.77	Increased academic achievement; equity gaps closed

**Looking Ahead.** SDSU will continue to refine and evaluate academic policies and frameworks, including individualized advising and examination of institutional barriers that may unintentionally complicate students' academic paths, to strengthen student success. At the same time, SDSU recognizes that its efforts do not always reach all students equitably and that coordination across programs can sometimes be inconsistent. To address these gaps, the university is prioritizing stronger data integration, clearer accountability structures, and cross-divisional collaboration so that every student can benefit from a coherent network of aid. For graduate students, SDSU will expand mentoring resources that foster scholarly and professional growth. As new independent and applied doctoral programs are established, the university needs to increase administrative staffing and capacity and build a sustainable infrastructure for doctoral programs in order to ensure quality and long-term viability.

### **Holistic Well-being (1.2, 1.3, 2.3, 2.13, 2.14, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.10, 4.3, 4.8)**

While academic programming is undeniably valuable, the student success metrics highlighted above are also boosted by SDSU's efforts to support students outside of the classroom. SDSU's comprehensive approach addresses multiple contributors to well-being and is integrated across several offices, mostly housed in Student Affairs and Campus Diversity (SACD). For example, meeting students' basic needs, including access to food, housing, and health services, is the focus of the [Basic Needs Center](#) and [Economic Crisis Response Team](#) (ECRT), which work in collaboration with [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (C&PS). In addition, the [Campus Assistance, Response, Evaluation and Support](#) (CARES) team provides coordinated care to students with more complex needs. Students experiencing financial stress, which is often amplified by the high cost of living in San Diego, can receive help from the [Cal Coast Student Financial Center](#) (SFC) and the [Office of Housing Administration](#) (OHA). Student sense of belonging is supported through several community centers, programs for specific populations like commuters, veterans, and graduate students, and the coordinated advising approach. While each of these programs, discussed in greater detail in the following sections, is individually valuable, together they form a more comprehensive structure that helps students learn resiliency skills and helps them succeed academically and in their post-graduation goals.

**Addressing Basic Needs.** Prior to 2020, SDSU had several programs supporting basic needs for students, however, they were situated in various offices around campus and lacked visibility, making it difficult for students to get the help they needed. C&PS was also under-staffed, with a student-counselor ratio significantly above national standards, and there was very little programming for students at the SDSU IV campus. In response to the goals set out in the campus Strategic Plan, the university's efforts focused both on expanding services and on centralizing and coordinating programs to help connect students with relevant resources, particularly via the [Basic Needs Center](#). The scope of these programs is detailed in table 11.

**Table 11: Basic Needs Resources**

Program	Description	Services
<a href="#">Basic Needs Center</a>	Opened in 2020 per direction provided in the Strategic Plan, to centralize access to critical resources (such as food, housing, financial assistance and health services).	Connects students to resources such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic Needs Kit program</li> <li>● Transportation Assistance Application (for support with parking permits and public transit passes)</li> <li>● CalFresh and Medi-Cal enrollment onsite</li> <li>● Supplemental Grocery Assistance Program</li> <li>● Fee Relief Grants</li> </ul>
Associated Students' <a href="#">Aztecs Rock Hunger</a>	Annual campaign to raise money for ECRT, the AS Food Pantry and the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank.	In 2024, AS surpassed \$1M in lifetime donations since the campaign began in 2010. The on-campus food pantry distributes, on average, over 100,000 pounds of food annually, including fresh produce to SDSU students while providing education on other programs that fight food insecurity.
<a href="#">Counseling and Psychological Services</a> (C&PS)	Offers a comprehensive approach to student mental health, from prevention to intervention and treatment to crisis and tragedy debriefing.	A new student fee adopted in 2019 has helped reduce the student-counselor ratio from 2732:1 in 2016 to 1329:1 in 2025. Specific student populations, such as Athletics and Guardian Scholars (foster youth) are also supported with embedded counselors. Treatment modalities include group therapy, workshops, biofeedback and certified trauma therapies. Prevention measures include alcohol prevention and intervention programming; training in suicide prevention and supporting students in distress; providing quiet space for reflection in the <a href="#">Center for Well-Being</a> . The <a href="#">Psychiatric Crisis Assessment Response Team</a> utilizes mental health providers in collaboration with the University Police Department for emergency situations.
<a href="#">Campus Assistance, Response, Evaluation and Support</a> (CARES) Team	A multidisciplinary group of professional staff members who review, assess, and respond to student issues that may present barriers to their personal and academic success.	Connect the campus community to resources and available interventions to address issues such as food and housing insecurity, emotional distress, health concerns, impact of disruptive behavior on the community, and targets of violence/harm
Imperial Valley	<a href="#">Student Wellness and Success Center opened 2025</a>	<a href="#">Imperial Valley Student Success Center</a> : The department aims to increase retention efforts and overall student success by having proactive contact with students, connecting them to the right resources on campus, as well collaborating with departments across the university to develop and support initiatives that enhance student success.

**Financial Support.** Issues like food and housing insecurity are closely tied to financial stress, noted as a problem by 67% of students who responded to the WISHES survey ([exhibit 2.17](#)), and creates an additional obstacle to student success. As with other basic needs programs, SDSU has worked both to expand resources and to improve accessibility and visibility so that more students can take full advantage of those resources. The SDSU Cal Coast Student Financial Center (SFC), housed in Enrollment Services and Financial Aid along with Admissions and the University Registrar, has been critical in those efforts, serving as a one-stop shop for financial literacy, assistance with financial aid, and student accounts and billing. The SFC team also oversaw the transition to [Aztec Scholarships](#), and that platform's simplified application and administration process allowed SDSU to dramatically increase the utilization of scholarship funds: in 2023-24, 99.9% of scholarship funds were disbursed, the highest recorded level in SDSU history and more than 30 percentage points higher than 2016-17 when only 61% of funds made their way to students. Those efforts are enhanced by the success of the university's expanded outreach to parents, alumni, and community members for philanthropic giving focused on student success (see examples in [exhibit 3.07](#)).

Financial stress for students is exacerbated by the difficulty students face in finding affordable housing in San Diego. To assist these students, SDSU's Office of Housing Administration leads efforts to provide additional housing through new construction and master leases (table 12). Most recently, construction began on new projects that will add thousands of undergraduate beds by summer 2027, including [40 affordable housing beds](#) at SDSU IV, in partnership with Imperial Valley College. The need for affordable graduate housing is also high, and in 2022, SDSU made available 11 below market rate units (with 23 beds) for graduate students. However, with 107 graduate students on the AY 2025-26 waitlist for these beds, more was needed, and thus, SDSU is converting another campus apartment building to provide up to 200 additional beds of below market rate housing to graduate students by AY 2026-27.

Table 12: Financial and Housing Resources

Program	Description	Services
<a href="#">SDSU Cal Coast Student Financial Center</a> (SFC)	Integrated office aiding student financial literacy and development, and assisting students and parents with financial aid, scholarships, and student account/billing questions.	The center's financial literacy services include workshops, one-on-one financial coaching, and access to <a href="#">i-Grad</a> , a no-cost financial wellness tool.
University Library	The Library provides <a href="#">financial literacy resources</a> and promotes affordable educational materials.	An ongoing collaboration between the library and bookstore generated more than \$1.4 million in student savings on educational materials between spring 2023 - summer 2025 and, in 2024, library-purchased multi-user e-books made up almost 10% of the educational materials available for a flat fee per unit to students on the <a href="#">first day of class</a> .
<a href="#">Economic Crisis Response Team</a> (ECRT)	Program within the Basic Needs Center that aims to bridge the gap in resources for students experiencing immediate food, housing, or unforeseen financial crises that impact student success. In 2024-25 the Basic Needs Center had 8,800 check-ins.	Supports students through crisis by leveraging a campus-wide collaboration utilizing on- and off-campus partnerships and providing direct referrals based on each student's unique circumstances. In 2024-25, ECRT served 1,838 individual students and provided \$37,098 in emergency food and transportation card support; \$58,420 in emergency housing support.
Graduate Student Housing	Address needs for Graduate Student housing support.	Since 2022, SDSU has offered below market rate housing for graduate students by reserving 11 two- and three-unit bedroom apartments in a complex just off campus. SDSU will convert another on campus apartment building into below market graduate student housing, which will accommodate approximately 200 more graduate students in AY2026/27.
<a href="#">Office of Housing Administration</a> (OHA)	Works to address student housing demand through new construction, master leases to provide more affordable housing options.	Over the past 10 years, OHA has added 3,750 beds for undergraduates (1,500 through new construction, 2,250 through master leases); the <a href="#">Evolve project</a> will add another 4,400 beds in three new buildings on the San Diego campus in a phased construction project, with the first two buildings scheduled for completion by summer 2026 and the third by summer 2027.
Increase Philanthropic Efforts	Increase student support through philanthropic efforts.	In 2022-23, the university raised \$13.5M for scholarships and other student support, an increase of 250% since 2017. For example, in 2024, the Black Resource Center received a \$5M donation to support student success, retention and recruitment, as well as scholarships for students involved in the Center, which is open to all who wish to join.

***Mental and Emotional Well-being through Inclusive Community.*** Supporting student well-being by creating community and promoting a sense of belonging and inclusivity is a central tenet of the strategic plan. Efforts to meet this commitment begin from the moment students join the SDSU community. SDSU places most first-year students (including transfers) in a student success pathway to connect them academically and socially to the campus community. A student's chosen success pathway includes their first-year learning communities, a first-year seminar, and an assigned Coordinated Care advisor. Several of the pathways are oriented through community center-led learning communities focused around historically underserved groups. These learning communities support student success through a framework that addresses equity, justice, and inclusion, and that support often continues for the entirety of a student's time at SDSU (table 13). The [Center for Commuter Life](#) is an essential resource for commuter students, and emerged from conversations with the commuter student population, many of whom indicated that they had no place to go between classes and did not feel connected to the other students.

In addition to these proactive efforts, SDSU has taken steps to be as responsive as possible when students experience situations that may threaten their sense of belonging. SDSU's Inclusive Communication System ([Inclusive SDSU](#)) focuses on supporting those who may have been harmed by bias-related encounters, working to connect them with other campus resources. The [SDSU Connects](#) program conducts individual outreach to students, answers students' questions, mentors students, and connects them to appropriate resources on campus that then helps them through a variety of university processes, including registration. This has been an especially important resource for first-generation students.



**Table 13: Offices and Programs Promoting Student Sense of Belonging**

Program	Description	Services
<a href="#">SDSU Community Centers</a>	The Centers facilitate the learning and growth of traditionally underserved students through programs and events that educate the campus; facilitation of intergroup dialogues to address pressing issues; and advocacy with campus stakeholders to create an institutional climate that supports the students we serve.	The 10 centers offer academic and personal support for historically underserved students; in 2024-25, the centers hosted over 1,092 events with 26,325 participants and had 34,151 visits to their physical center spaces. They also lead programming for campus <a href="#">Heritage Month</a> celebrations.
<a href="#">Allyship seminars</a>	Training programs to educate the campus community about specific identity communities	Safe Zones is offered by the Pride Center, the Brave Project is offered by the Women's Resource Center, UndocuAlly is offered by the Monarch Unity Resource Center, Military Ally is offered by the Veterans' Center, and Ability Ally is offered by Student Disability Services. Other centers are currently developing similar programs.
<a href="#">"First-Gen" (First-Generation) Student Success, Guardian Scholars</a> in EOPOS, the <a href="#">Center for Commuter Life</a> , and the <a href="#">Military and Veterans Programs (MVP)</a> housed in the Joan and Art Barron Veterans Center	These programs provide support for first-generation students, current or former foster youth, commuter students, and veterans and military-affiliated students, respectively.	Each of these programs offers mentoring, academic advising and support, and community-building events, as well as population-specific resources. For example, the <a href="#">Commuter Student Success Pathways</a> serve approximately 1,900 students annually with tailored academic pathways based on their major, time commitments, and interests, while MVP supports active-duty service members, veterans and their families by providing information and assistance regarding admissions, federal and state educational benefits, and personal and professional development opportunities.

**Additional Resources for Graduate Students.** While inclusive community groups and activities are open to graduate students, graduate student needs differ, and thus, the [Office for Graduate Life and Diversity](#) (GLaD), created in 2021 and funded by the Graduate Student Experience Program fee (GSEP), provides programming geared towards helping graduate students maximize their educational experiences. The GSEP fee enables students to access the Graduate Writing Center, career readiness events, social gatherings, leadership development programs, and resources to aid transition to graduate school. Students can opt out of GSEP and those who do still retain limited access to GLaD services (e.g., students can receive two appointments per month at the Graduate Writing Center). Finally, SDSU has also begun offering the [Graduate Student Health Insurance Program](#) (GSHIP) to ensure all graduate students have health, vision, and dental coverage. The program provides students aid in either obtaining affordable healthcare coverage or verifying their existing health insurance.

**Looking Ahead.** Because co-curricular activities contribute to improvements in student success metrics, several Phase II activities are designed to further strengthen this infrastructure. These efforts reflect a growing awareness that holistic student success requires sustained attention to all aspects of wellness—physical, mental, and social. Planned activities include the expansion of campus resources addressing alcohol and drug use, nutrition and wellness education, and an enhanced partnership between university police and Counseling & Psychological Services to provide coordinated mental health

response and prevention. In addition, the university remains committed to supporting students facing housing insecurity and homelessness, including the current development of SDSU's new [Evolve Student Housing Project](#), targeted for first-phase opening in 2026. The SACD Data Camp Initiative continues to help offices identify overlaps in services, strengthen collaboration, and better [connect outcomes](#) to WISHES survey data ([exhibit 2.17](#)), leading to more cost-effective programming and improved operational efficiency. These efforts also extend to graduate students, whose well-being is often shaped by distinctive challenges such as limited access to mental health and professional development resources. Strengthening student services through expanded advising, mentorship, and wellness programming are critical and position the university to proactively navigate the evolving social and political landscape. The divisive national context underscores the need for even more intentional and inclusive systems that encourage conversations, promote belonging and well-being among the entire student body.

#### **Increasing Career Readiness (CFR 2.11, 3.4, 4.2, 4.5)**

Although traditional measures of student success like enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates are important components of student success, SDSU recognizes it needs to look beyond graduation to what awaits students in the workforce. The university is increasingly asking the questions, "How do we measure the value of an SDSU degree?" and, more important, "What can the institution do to aid students in their career aspirations?"

While the value of an SDSU education cannot and should not solely be assessed with employment data, fostering social mobility is an important value of the university. The institution educates large numbers of first-generation students and their success could have widespread reach across families and communities. Further, SDSU's ability to demonstrate the [return on investment \(ROI\) of an SDSU education](#) and the success of students in securing post-graduate employment in their desired career paths is relevant to students ([exhibit 3.08](#)) and helps encourage others to seek out higher education. The institution also has an opportunity to shape the future workforce by leveraging the research and innovation of faculty, staff, students, and industry partners. SDSU's campus within the city of San Diego – with hubs for biotechnology, computing and the blue economy – and its campus in IV – adjacent to the emerging Lithium Valley project – affords unique opportunities to align educational experiences with industry-specific skills that will benefit students and the region for decades. While using education to advance social mobility has always been at the heart of SDSU's efforts, what has changed is the intentional approach to supporting post-graduation outcomes.

**Enhancing and expanding career services outreach.** In 2022, SDSU made a strategic investment in improving the infrastructure of its [Career Services](#) center by hiring an executive director and engaging the center in a strategic planning process. Career Services' 2023 three-year strategic plan ([exhibit 3.09](#)) concentrates on preparing students for the workforce by committing to improving industry engagement with SDSU, tailoring services to the needs of regional partners, helping SDSU become a community leader in regional workforce development and providing student services in a flexible manner. Students have access to career fairs, networking events, and on-campus recruitment opportunities. Career Services offers year-round activities that helped prepare nearly 18,000 students for the workforce last fiscal year.

SDSU led the industry research effort that informed Governor Gavin Newsom's Executive Order on the California [Master Plan for Career Education](#). SDSU secured and analyzed responses from over 2,100 employers to better understand how industry wants to engage with education. As a result, SDSU hosted an industry/educator summit attracting 200 attendees and has worked on closer alignment between workforce development and colleges ([exhibit 3.10](#)).

In the last three years, Career Services' ability to expand programming, stems from its new emphasis on applying for grants. Given limited state funding, obtaining grants has been crucial to expanding student services and a few notable examples of grant success include:

1. Opportunity Young Adult (approximately \$2M), funded by the Employment Development Department, makes SDSU a federally designated career services provider under the U.S. Department of Labor.
2. Career Services Innovation (\$300k), funded by Strada Education Foundation, makes SDSU one of only seven universities to receive this grant.
3. K-16 Collaborative (\$320k), funded by the State of California, allows SDSU to adopt a regional approach to workforce development.
4. HealthWorks (\$1M), funded by the U.S Department of Labor, allows SDSU to design and register apprenticeship programs and helps students align their academic experiences with real-world workforce needs.

Collectively, the expected outcomes funded through these grants emphasize employment attainment (approximately 70%), work-based learning participation (65–75%), skills enhancement, and pathways to livable-wage careers (approximately \$29/ hour).

In addition, SDSU has seen strong philanthropic support that fuels student success and career readiness, including a [\\$2.5 million gift](#) to expand Fowler College of Business career programs and a [\\$145,000 contribution](#) from Alaska Airlines for Career Services initiatives. The grant and philanthropic investments help build skills, employer connections, and workforce pathways for students. SDSU continues to actively target external revenue streams to grow resources that further enhance workforce preparation and expand opportunities for all students.

A key focus of SDSU Career Services is understanding student employment outcomes to address student needs. In 2023, Career Services deployed a Career Submission Survey to all students, with a focus on capturing graduating students' responses. The survey was completed by 25,000 students, provided information on student career path and final destination trends, and helped stakeholders understand where targeted improvement could be beneficial. For example, the survey indicated that Black students disproportionately worked full-time while going to school compared to other ethnicities. To help support the needs of Black students, Career Services launched an annual Black Resource Center Career Fair. The survey also indicated that over two-thirds of the student population searched for work during the academic year. Career Services added an "On-Campus Jobs" career fair to inform students about on-campus employment opportunities to help students find work, provided virtual advising on evenings and weekends to expand access to students who work during the day, and transitioned from offering approximately six career fairs annually across 4-5 months to hosting over 20 career fairs year-round to provide more opportunities for students to connect with employers. These efforts have helped; approximately 83% of graduating undergraduate students reported that they participated in some form of work experience during their college career (exceeding the strategic plan goal of placing 75% of undergraduate students in work-based learning activities) and felt either prepared for the workforce or continuing education. Survey data also found that over 77% of graduate students reported being employed or continuing their education at the time of graduation. Among those entering the workforce, the average satisfaction with their career choice was 8 out of 10.

It is significant that SDSU's Career Services was awarded the “[Most Valuable](#)” organization by the Mountain Pacific Association of Colleges and Employers, beating out all career centers and institutions across 13 states in the Pacific and Mountain Time Zones (see other accomplishments in FY 2024-2025 in [exhibit 3.11](#)). Overall, while Career Services has made significant strides over the past four years, SDSU will continue to analyze the Career Submission survey results, feedback from employers, and work with faculty to develop opportunities for undergraduates under Phase II of the strategic plan.

SDSU is now expanding on these initiatives to better serve its graduate student population. Specifically, the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) is working with IT to develop GradTRAC (Graduate Tracking, Retention, and Completion), an integrated platform that will allow doctoral program directors (and eventually master's program advisors) to track student progress during their training as well as throughout their post-graduate careers. This capability is particularly important given the diversity of SDSU's graduate population: many students come from the greater San Diego region, some pursue rigorous PhD programs and move into academia or industry, while others are working professionals seeking advancement through professional doctoral programs (e.g., Doctor of Education, Doctor of Public Health). Together, GradTRAC, survey outcomes from Career Services, and Lightcast data (described in Looking Ahead section) will provide SDSU with a comprehensive, data-informed understanding of graduate alumni career pathways, strengthening institutional planning and long-term student success.

**Academic Affairs.** Academic Affairs has increased efforts to connect the skills employers are seeking with SDSU's continuously updated curriculum. For instance, in Fall 2023, about half of the first-year seminars, in consultation with the San Diego Workforce Partnership, introduced students to career envisioning and planning, a program expanded to first-year undeclared students in 2025. The Psychology Department created [PSY 201](#), Academic and Career Opportunities in Psychology, which helps students identify career-related strengths and interests and provides information on post-baccalaureate options in psychology and related fields. The undergraduate Interdisciplinary Studies in Three Departments (IS3D) program updated its core curriculum, starting in AY 2024-25, to guide students through explorations of interdisciplinary problem-solving as a workforce asset, internships, and career-envisioned capstone projects. In 2025, the College of Arts and Letters (CAL) began [CAL Advance](#), a program that allows incoming students to identify not only their academic major but also a future oriented “meta major” such as “business and entrepreneurship” or “public service and social impact.” Students are assigned to dedicated first-year seminar sections that offer presentations by early career alumni, research faculty in relevant fields, relevant undergraduate clubs, and local San Diego representatives, all of which encourage students to think about their first/next steps to future careers. In the program's pilot year, it enrolled nearly 50% more students than initially projected, strongly indicating that the program has tapped an unmet need and that Academic Affairs should develop more opportunities for students' to engage in post-graduation conversations.

Several graduate programs have programmatic requirements for internships that occur in the community, and thus, placement support is built into the programs' infrastructure. For instance, numerous programs across colleges have graduate programs that integrate a minimum number of experiential hours via community internships (e.g., Master of Public Administration, Master of City Planning), field placements (e.g., Master of Public Health), or practicum experiences (PhD in Clinical Psychology, Master of Arts in Speech-Language Pathology, Doctor of Physical Therapy, Master of Social Work, Master of Science in Early Childhood & Family Clinical Counseling, to name a few). More broadly, SDSU's CGS, in collaboration with seven other CSU campuses, secured a grant to expand co-curricular programming to address career competencies for graduate students. The campuses developed (through SDSU's lead instructional designer) an asynchronous course called

[“The Next Step: Graduate Professional Development”](#) that contains eight modules (one for each of [NACE's career competencies](#)) with badges for each competency, and offers a career readiness microcredential for completion of the entire course. This program is available for free to all 50K+ CSU graduate students.

**Career Readiness, Workforce Development, and the Imperial Valley.** The Imperial Valley campus expansion is a prime example of SDSU's approach towards workforce development using data-informed initiatives. The university has significantly invested in SDSU IV, hiring new faculty (up from 16 to 28 T/TT faculty between 2017-2025), reinstating four-year degree programs, and improving instructional, research, and student support spaces. Prior to developing degree programs, SDSU consulted with industry experts and conducted workforce studies to determine which degrees would be most useful for the emerging Lithium Valley initiative, ultimately creating degree programs in Chemistry and Electrical Engineering to be housed in the new [\\$80M STEM building](#) in Brawley, funded by Gov. Newsom for Lithium Valley. This is the first science building at SDSU IV and it allows SDSU to offer science courses that require wet labs, not only for Chemistry and Electrical Engineering, but also for recently established degree programs in Nursing and Public Health-Environmental Health. New emphasis on extracting lithium in the Salton Sea area — an estimated \$540B worth — placed SDSU in an enviable position of being the only four-year university serving the Imperial Valley, and SDSU's new STEM building, with its multiple core facilities installed with major instruments, will attract P3 partnerships with major lithium companies already in Imperial Valley for research collaborations and workforce development. The state's investment in IV may not have occurred without SDSU's data-rich analysis of community workforce needs.

**Looking Ahead.** Improving students' career readiness will remain a significant feature of SDSU's mission. Career Services is concluding the final year of its strategic plan, and is actively engaging stakeholders to shape priorities for the next planning cycle. Key focus areas will include expanding the use of labor market information to inform decision-making and aligning and integrating SDSU's efforts with the region's community colleges and workforce development boards to enhance the campuses' career service frameworks. The [SDSU Mission Valley Innovation District](#) developers will work with industry partners to ensure that SDSU trains students to meet workforce demands. New independent doctoral program proposals must show workforce relevance to be viable. SDSU's participation in the creation of the systemwide graduate student professional development microcredential boosts the university's efforts to help graduate students. While Academic Affairs' focus on career development as a unified approach is in the early stages of development, the success of CAL Advance indicates these efforts are well received. Starting in Fall 2026, the university catalog will include opportunities for programs to address their contributions to career readiness.

In 2025, these efforts accelerated when SDSU commissioned Lightcast Consulting to conduct a comprehensive analysis of SDSU alumni employment outcomes. Matching SDSU records with social media posts, Lightcast Consulting was able to provide information on the post-graduation path of over 100,000 alumni. Lightcast also conducted an analysis of the value of an SDSU degree ([exhibit 3.12](#)). The report found that for every dollar invested in an SDSU education (defined as tuition, less student loans, books and supplies, and foregone earnings less residual aid; Lightcast analysis does not include the cost of housing in its analysis under the assumption that housing is a necessity regardless of whether the individual is a student), a SDSU undergraduate gains an average of \$10.2 dollars in lifetime earnings. This significant 10.2:1 cost benefit ratio underscores SDSU's Carnegie designation as an Opportunity University and provides a baseline understanding of the ROI of an SDSU degree. The university is already [disaggregating the data for more nuanced analysis](#) and will use this information to inform future decisions and plan for improvements.

## Reflections

The WSCUC reaffirmation process provided an opportunity for self-reflection that helped SDSU contextualize its strengths and better understand its challenges, a process particularly useful as the university moves to implement priorities under Phase II of the strategic plan. The need for SDSU's integration of research excellence, support for social mobility, and strong undergraduate and graduate education—a combination unique to the CSU system—has never seemed more necessary within the diverse, rapidly changing, and technology-rich economy of California. Indeed, one of SDSU's greatest strengths is its ability to be successful on multiple fronts, often by “doing more with less”. That strength, however, also points to one of SDSU's most pressing questions: How can the university sustain its momentum in an increasingly challenging budgetary environment? While fiscal needs have historically been a concern, SDSU's improvements on multiple dimensions simultaneously while also navigating cuts in state appropriations and an inequitable CSU funding model, increasing enrollment, and grappling with faculty and staff fatigue have brought these challenges into even greater focus.

To be sure, the exceptional work of the faculty and staff is evident throughout this report. SDSU's improvements in virtually all student success metrics, research, scholarship, and creative activities, and philanthropic gifts over the last 10 years are documented in [table 1](#), and these successes helped the institution obtain R1 status. While R1 itself is a significant accomplishment for any school, much less one funded as a CSU, more impressive is that SDSU is one of only three institutions nationwide that earned R1/HSI/AANAPISI/Community Engagement designations while also advancing social mobility through its classification as an Opportunity University ([exhibit 1.07](#)). Compared to SDSU, one of the other universities is a private institution (Nova Southeastern) serving half as many students with almost five times higher tuition (\$39,000) and the other is a UC (UC Merced) serving a quarter as many students with 75% higher tuition (\$14,000). Neither is comparable in resources, but both help clarify the magnitude of SDSU's overperformance, made possible only by the efforts of the faculty and staff who work extraordinarily hard to help students succeed.

The reaffirmation process also revealed that SDSU has increased capacity to make data-informed, collaborative decisions. The cumulative impact of more readily available data, improved infrastructures, and better communication within units has improved change management and benefited student success. For instance, adding assessment offices, both in Academic Affairs and in Student Affairs and Campus Diversity provides a holistic view of student needs. The emphasis on career readiness in Academic Affairs and Career Services promotes student well-being and likelihood of post-graduation success. ASIR provides data for all units on campus to aid programming.

Yet even as SDSU's capacity and coordination have strengthened, and its faculty and staff continue to excel, the university faces mounting budgetary pressures. Indeed, as the 2016 WSCUC reaffirmation report noted, “As SDSU strives to creatively address budget shortfalls, its shift to focus on fundraising is commendable, as is its continued growth of research dollars. Such diversification of revenue sources is critical.” Since then, the university has significantly expanded research dollars through grants and raised almost a billion dollars through fundraising, but the strain on the base operating budget has remained. The state continues to reduce the CSU's base budget and the CSU has not yet significantly altered per student FTES funding to meet the needs of a growing campus. The reduction in available external funding due to shifts in federal priorities create further uncertainty. The latest round of budgetary pressures have highlighted SDSU's need for additional resources so that it can continue to excel on multiple fronts. Faculty and staff workplace experiences are impacted by these pressures.

We conclude we must further advance creative solutions. These solutions include continued development of prior strategies (e.g., external grants, philanthropic efforts, Global Campus growth), leveraging these external resources creatively, making adjustments internally that could reduce faculty and staff workload, and more aggressively lobbying state and CSU leadership to improve SDSU's budget allocations. In addition, SDSU is actively pursuing new partnerships with public and private entities to leverage external funding in support of areas such as university research, affordable workforce and student housing, expanded student access and outcomes, student and alumni career pathways, and athletics to complement existing state and university resources.

The university has a strong track record in this area. Despite uncertainties surrounding federal research funding, in 2024-2025, SDSU researchers secured over \$200M in awards for research, scholarship and creative activities, the university's second-highest research funding record. SDSU's ability to maintain a R1 status will rely on researchers' ability to secure external funding and the creation of the Division of Research and Innovation further bolsters these efforts. Similarly, the creation of the College of Graduate Studies has helped to not only expand doctoral programming, a core component of R1 determination, but also to establish procedures to provide faculty greater access to doctoral and master's students. Career Services' external grants awards allowed it to expand programming and double its operating budget, and the recent availability of Lightcast data should provide Career Services with information that makes it easier to apply for additional grants. SDSU's philanthropic efforts continue to be a vital mechanism for student, faculty, and staff support and Global Campus is developing new degrees for non-traditional learners and generating revenue. Although just a few examples are mentioned here, it is apparent that these strategies have been instrumental in supporting SDSU's mission and the university's additional investments should expand the success of these initiatives.

Second, the university's new approach of building partnerships with external stakeholders to scaffold resources and alleviate budget pressures, reduce faculty and staff workload, and mitigate space constraints have shown significant promise and these efforts will continue. For instance, SDSU recently forged agreements with local community colleges to fund the construction of an instructional building on the Mission Valley site and to lease space on their campuses to teach bachelor degree completion programs. Both are intended to make obtaining a four-year degree easier for community college students and enhance collaboration between SDSU and the community colleges.

Third, the university will also focus on finding process efficiencies to alleviate demands on faculty and staff time while supporting student progress towards degree. For instance, the new shared services model, while not broadly implemented yet, has already reduced staff workload by consolidating tasks and increasing staff expertise, and the university's planned expansion of the shared services model to more colleges in 2026 should be very impactful. A working group is evaluating strategies, including adopting more digital tools to reduce staff advising case loads. Conversations are underway with the Senate Academic Policy and Planning committee to further shorten the curriculum approval processes and faculty efforts to revamp curriculum to reduce barriers to student success may ultimately lead to a streamlining of advising services. SDSU will continue to evaluate where it can increase operational efficiencies to reduce faculty and staff workload. The university also recognizes that there are critical areas for improvement linked to state- or system-level issues (e.g., general salary increases and resolution of larger deferred maintenance projects).

SDSU has achieved incredible successes in the last decade despite these challenges. In particular, SDSU's recognition as an R1 is a major accomplishment resulting from the university's ability to substantially increase faculty research and expand

support for doctoral programs and graduate education. These successes have helped to further place its undergraduate programs in high demand. Research-active graduate programs also support the recruitment and retention of highly research-active faculty (e.g., many SDSU TT faculty have received NSF CAREER awards and NIH R01 [grants](#)), ensuring that undergraduate instruction remains current and rigorous. These programs likewise lead to increased student engagement by providing opportunities for mentored research, participation in labs or creative projects, and other professional development opportunities. Importantly, graduate students provide an additional layer of essential instructional and mentoring support—likely serving as role models to inspire a younger generation of student researchers, which is particularly valuable to a minority serving institution. The university’s research and graduate student support is vital to maintaining the quality, and thus, demand, for its undergraduate programs and leads to a more vibrant SDSU.

As SDSU reflects on its past 10 years and anticipates its future directions, the university is optimistic about what lies ahead, proud of its successes to date, and firm in three conclusions. First, SDSU’s focus on strong academic programs, research, scholarship and creative activities, and increasing educational access for undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral students will remain. These elements are essential to the reputation and core mission of SDSU and are thus non-negotiable. Second, the faculty and staff’s dedication and work ethic allow the university to flourish despite limited resources. Finally, the university knows that it must continue to look for ways to become more fiscally independent. Indeed, as the university continues to evolve, tensions are likely to persist between preserving our core values and stimulating necessary progress. Nonetheless, while SDSU understands the challenges to come, its progress over the last decade gives it confidence that it can meet those challenges undaunted and undeterred.

