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Acronym	Meaning
AA	Academic Affairs
AANAPISI	Asian American, Native American and Pacific Islander Serving Institution
AB	Assembly Bill
ASIR	Analytic Studies and Institutional Research
BFA	Business and Financial Affairs Division
BOT	California State University Board of Trustees
C&PS	Counseling and Psychological Services
CAA	Curriculum, Assessment and Accreditation office
CAL	College of Arts and Letters
Cal-GETC	California General Education Transfer Curriculum
CCA	Coordinated Care Advisor
CCC	California Community Colleges
CIE	Center for Inclusive Excellence
CO	Chancellor's Office
COEd	College of Education

Acronym	Meaning
COS	College of Sciences
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
ENGR	College of Engineering
EO	Executive Order (from Chancellor's Office)
EOP	Educational Opportunity Programs, Outreach and Success
ERG	Employee Resource Group
FASS	Faculty Advancement and Student Success
FCoB	Fowler College of Business
GC	Global Campus
GE	General Education
GLaD	Graduate Life and Diversity
GRAD or CGS	College of Graduate Studies
GSEP	Graduate Student Experience Program
HHS	College of Health and Human Services
HSI	Hispanic Serving Institution
ILO	Institutional Learning Outcome
IT or OneIT	Information Technology Division
IV	Imperial Valley
NSPP	New Student and Parent Programs
PBAC	President's Budget Advisory Committee
PECA	Program Evaluation, Compliance and Assessment office
PSFA	Professional Studies and Fine Arts College
SACD (or SA+CD)	Student Affairs and Campus Diversity Division
SDSU	San Diego State University
SDSU-IV	San Diego State University Imperial Valley
SFC	Cal Coast Student Financial Center
TPR	Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation
UC	University of California
URAD	University Relations and Development Division
UR&P	University Resources and Planning Committee
URM	Underrepresented Minority

1

Institutional Context

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) (CFR 1.1). With campuses in San Diego and Imperial Valley (in Calexico and Brawley), each located within miles of the U.S. Mexico border, SDSU serves over 41,000 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 31% increase in a decade (table 1). SDSU has a comprehensive academic profile, offering 100 undergraduate, 115 master's, and 25 doctoral programs as well as 53 undergraduate certificates and 79 post-baccalaureate certificates and credentials located in eight colleges (CFR 2.1 and 2.2). SDSU Global Campus (GC) is a self-support unit which reaches 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 strongly embedded in the local community, but with national and international reach, evident in its consistently high rankings (appendix 1.1).

The university is committed to inclusive practices that support the success of all students (CFR 1.2 and 2.13). The campus is designated 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 Imperial Valley (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. SDSU Global Campus programs in Palau, the Republic of Georgia, and in Centinela prison (funded by a million-dollar Mellon grant) expand educational opportunities in places that would

otherwise not have access to university degrees. The university's strong research profile and its engagement with the community further provide valuable pathways for student development. Indeed, since SDSU's last reaffirmation in 2016, most metrics related to student success, research productivity, and philanthropy have strengthened (table 1, CFR 2.10 and 4.2).

Table 1: SDSU Overview (Appendix 1.2: Expanded Table 1)

Enrollment & Applications	**Fall 2016**	**Fall 2025**	**% Increase**
Applications	94,564	123,445	30.5%
Total Fall Enrollment (San Diego & IV & GC)	35,238	41,184	16.9%
Fall Enrollment (San Diego, Undergrad)	29,046	35,283	21.5%
Fall Enrollment (IV, Undergrad)	828	1,131	36.6%
Graduate Enrollment (San Diego & IV)	4,835	4,988	3.2%
First-time Freshmen (FTF) Class (San Diego & IV)	5,077	6,911	36.1%
First-year Freshmen Avg HS GPA (San Diego)	3.68	3.83	4.1%
New Transfer Class (San Diego & IV)	3,679	4,451	21.0%
New Transfer Avg College GPA (San Diego)	3.23	3.42	5.9%
Continuation & Graduation			**% Increase**
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%
Student Support	**2015-16**	**2024-25**	**% Increase**
Counseling & Psychological Services Student:Counselor Ratio (first # is 2016)	2,732:1	1,329:1	
Total Scholarships Awarded	2,366	2,647	11.9%
Percentage of Scholarships Distributed	65%	99.96%	35.0%
Research & Scholarly Activities	**2015-16**	**2024-25**	**% Increase**
Research Funding (second # is 2023-24)	$130M	$229.8M	76.8%

Number of Masters Programs	78	115	47.4%
Number of Masters Degrees Conferred	1,758	1,703	-3.1%
Number of Doctoral Programs	22	25	13.6%
Number of Doctoral Degrees Conferred	142	179	26.1%
Philanthropy	**2015-16**	**2024-25**	**% Increase**
Fundraising (second # is 2023-24)	$107M	$132M	23.4%
Endowment Amount	$205M	$495M	141.5%

Looking ahead, following voter approval in 2018, SDSU began its 132-acre campus expansion in Mission Valley, located five miles west of SDSU's campus. Building upon the 35,000 seat Snapdragon stadium that opened in 2022, and the 34-acre River Park that opened in late 2023, the Mission Valley site will include 4,600 units of housing with 10% of these units reserved for affordable housing (CFR 3.1 and 3.2) and a 1.6 million square foot innovation district intended to deepen university collaboration with public and private partners and help create educational experiences for students (CFR 3.6). When completed, Mission Valley will also boost the university's already substantial impact on the regional economy, last estimated in 2017 at $5.7 billion annually, by an estimated additional $3 billion (appendix 1.3).

Strategic Plan and Shared Governance.

In 2018, Dr. Adela de la Torre became the university's ninth president and engaged the campus community in a strategic planning process (CFR 4.8). Adopted in 2020, the resulting five-year strategic plan, "We Rise We Defy: Transcending Borders, Transforming Lives," identifies 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. With 83% of the plan's goals implemented, the strategic plan has guided institutional planning (CFR 4.5). In 2026, the university launched Phase II of the strategic plan to reflect on and then continue to advance Phase I accomplishments.

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 towards supporting all students. SDSU's "*We Are SDSU*" prioritizes increasing educational access by improving funding to SDSU Imperial Valley and by supporting international students and non-traditional learners through SDSU 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. Its "*Resilience: Designed to Thrive*" priority is focused on diversifying funding sources, a process increasingly necessary given state budget and federal research funding challenges.

Phase II of the strategic plan continues the university's efforts to expand inclusive student support services (CFR 2.12 and 2.13). 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 and thus the university continues to work on ensuring course availability (CFR 4.3). SDSU has seen a surge in need for student disability accommodations, and Phase II focuses on increasing inclusive and equitable services for disabled students. The university's commitment to educational access remains as it expands programs to additional areas in San Diego (e.g., Chula Vista) and Oaxaca, Mexico, creates joint degrees with international institutions, and develops professional and applied doctoral programs. Although over 1,700 undergraduate students participate in funded research projects annually (in addition to our graduate students), this total falls short of SDSU's goal of providing research experience for all eligible and interested students and thus expanding

opportunities for student research is still a focus. The strategic plan has helped set the university's agenda and inform conversations on improving student success.

The overall success of the strategic plan stems in part from SDSU's long standing emphasis on shared governance procedures and ensuring stakeholder engagement. 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. In addition, decision-making is informed by input from the Council of Vice Presidents, the President's Budget Advisory Committee (PBAC), the Council of Chairs and Directors, Academic Deans, the Alumni Association, and five auxiliary organizations. 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 with input from campuses. See appendix 1.4 for SDSU's organizational chart (CFR 3.9 and 3.11).

The California Master Plan and Budgetary Challenges.

The university's institutional context is 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 graduate education and a strong research profile within a Master Plan mandated budget model that does not fund either (CFR 3.4 and 3.5), but this success comes with funding challenges.

Measuring how colleges contribute to social mobility became easier in 2025, when the Carnegie Foundation introduced its new "Student Access and Earnings" category. Institutions

recognized as "best" schools for social mobility—designated as "Opportunity Colleges and Universities"—combine high student access with strong post-graduation earnings. Consistent with California's Master Plan, SDSU is one of 15 CSU campuses recognized as an Opportunity school. Moreover, while all 10 UC campuses hold the R1 classification, SDSU is the only CSU to achieve this distinction. The university steadfastly 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 further help delineate its institutional context. SDSU holds the Carnegie "Community Engagement" designation (SDSU's 2025 application for renewal is in appendix 1.5) along with two minority serving designations (HSI and AANAPISI). When considered jointly, SDSU is *the only university nationwide* that has earned these Carnegie Classifications while also supporting a Division 1 athletics program (appendix 1.6). Although 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.

Indeed, chronic shortages in state appropriations and a Master Plan funding model that does not prioritize research and graduate education for the CSUs (see appendix 1.7 for a budget overview), CSU funding formulas, and changes in 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 (CFR 3.4). Shared with the campus through the SDSU Budget Hub, the university has managed budget cuts by reducing management personnel, implementing a hiring chill, cutting non-essential travel, implementing shared

services, and deferring or suspending multi-year projects. The hiring chill, in particular, has increased workload and been burdensome for faculty and staff.

An additional challenge comes from the CSU funding model. While SDSU acknowledges and respects the need for the CSU to support campuses struggling with enrollment, the result of this need is that the CSU system provides less money per student to SDSU than any other CSU campus. The system also looks to SDSU as one of a few campuses able to increase capacity to meet system enrollment targets and SDSU supports those needs. The end result, however, is that SDSU is not fully funded through state/CSU appropriations to educate California undergraduate or graduate residents but is asked to enroll more of these students, straining campus resources.

More recently, changes to federal grant awarding priorities, loss of HSI grants, and immigration policies 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 student support) and loss of HSI funding harms student success programs. Further, as a trans-border university, SDSU is committed to supporting internationalization. Changes in immigration policies have not only dampened international student enrollment and tuition revenues but have also hampered expansion of international startup business partnerships and binational research collaborations. More intangible, students (and faculty and staff) continue to voice fear for their safety stemming from changes in immigration policy. This fear increases anxiety and is detrimental to student success and campus morale.

That said, while SDSU recognizes it is fortunate to have healthy enrollments and thus is not centrally closing programs, firing faculty and staff, or facing threats to its *core* educational mission, it is nonetheless actively looking for ways to sustain its *comprehensive* emphasis on social mobility, access, and research. Internally, 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 when possible (deferred maintenance projects are detailed in appendix 1.8). The Mission Valley development will eventually generate revenue. Global Campus operations are expanding and philanthropic giving has improved (SDSU raised $131.9 million in 2023-24 and recently received a $20 million pledge to build a much-needed Science building). These measures help, and the university will continue to explore ways to diversify its revenue streams for greater financial resilience while it also lobbies state and CSU leadership for improved budgetary support (CFR 3.5) to address larger deferred maintenance projects and improve faculty and staff compensation.

Process to Prepare the Institutional Report

San Diego State's institutional report was written through a collaborative process involving administrators, faculty, staff, and students, working over three years (CFR 4.6 and 4.8). Starting in 2022, the university created a steering committee to evaluate the status of the strategic plan and the institution's actions following the 2016 WSCUC recommendations and create a repository of data on SDSU's trajectory since reaffirmation. Following, the committee recommended a TPR theme, received guidance from campus stakeholders, and presented the theme application to WSCUC. In 2023, a WSCUC writing committee - divided into writing groups each responsible for a discrete section - drafted the report. During the academic year 2024-25, a smaller group edited the then 90-page single spaced report to a more appropriate size and began, in spring 2025, to circulate the report to campus stakeholders. The report was made available to the entire campus community for comment in October 2025. The full process for the report's construction is located on the 2025-26 WSCUC Reaffirmation of Accreditation website.

Response to Previous Commission Actions

San Diego State was reviewed by WSCUC during the 2015-16 academic year. The commission reaffirmed the university for ten years while making four recommendations (reflecting the 2013 CFR):

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 support all students.

Recommendation 1. General Education

In the 2016 reaffirmation report, WSCUC recommended SDSU strengthen its General Education (GE) program. In response, SDSU undertook significant structural changes to GE while concurrently implementing new system-wide GE requirements which, since 2015, have been altered four times (appendix 2.1; CFR 2.1).

GE and Institutional Goals, Curriculum Integration, and Program Coordination. In an attempt to improve GE alignment and outcomes, a General Education Reform Task Force was formed in 2018 with representation from across SDSU. An early decision of that Task Force was that SDSU needed Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) to frame any widespread curriculum revisions, such as for General Education. 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. Following, SDSU mapped GE goals and program degree learning outcomes (DLOs) to the ILOs to help determine if students have degree-level subject matter expertise and sufficient knowledge of core educational competencies and identify areas for improvements (CFR 2.2 and 2.3).

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, some programs are developing intentional curricular pathways that enable students to build on GE competencies and help them demonstrate transferable skills upon graduation (CFR 2.2 and 2.3). 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 support learning outcomes relevant to engineering design, RWS instructors help students enhance their professional communication skills essential for workforce development (CFR 2.7). Following the success of this synergistic learning approach, SDSU created a working group to create a formal process to encourage similar interdisciplinary and cross-college collaborations.

To support better coordination across academic programs, the university restructured divisions and modified the curriculum review process. In 2020, Curriculum Services transitioned from Enrollment Services to the newly created Office of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accreditation (CAA) (CFR 4.1). 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 structural changes to strengthen student understanding of the value of GE (CFR 2.12). GE requirements are now explicitly incorporated into SDSU's New Student Orientation (appendix 2.2), with an introduction in the Pre-Orientation Modules, inclusion in the Advising Brochure and New Student Handbook, and discussion in on-campus orientation sessions for parents and students. The university also increased advising resources through its new advising model (called Coordinated Care, discussed in the TPR section).

These interventions prompted the creation of a 2025 GE task force (appendix 2.3) to evaluate how programs can use GE and electives to create more cohesion within student plans of study and better prepare them for post-graduation. Although in early stages, the task force is charged with providing suggestions to majors on how GE skills can complement program offerings. This "next step" is a by-product of continuous evaluation of SDSU's GE program and should help SDSU refine its GE program (CFR 2.2, 4.5 and 4.6).

Recommendation 2. Information Technology and Data Governance

The Commission recommended SDSU improve information technology (IT) and data governance. Consequently, in 2017, SDSU engaged Moran Technology Consulting to review the current structure and recommend improvements.

New IT structure. The Moran Report (appendix 2.4) emphasized the need to expand the role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) to one that provides leadership for cross-campus IT collaboration (CFR 3.6 and 3.11) and, thus, in 2019, SDSU created a vice president for IT and CIO position. The CIO, as senior technology strategist, has primary responsibility for delivering campus wide IT solutions, providing managerial oversight for IT units, administering the budget, and working with senior leadership to advance the university's mission. In addition, SDSU

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 leaders from across the university (including Associated Students) and is charged with identifying opportunities to enhance IT effectiveness, codifying policies to ensure consistency and accountability, and proactively addressing areas of risk. In 2021, SDSU created the OneIT Community (appendix 2.5) which enabled the consolidation of help-desk support. IT is further positioned to respond to academic needs through the University Senate's Instructional and Information Technology (IIT) Committee, which helps IT respond to faculty concerns. These measures have resulted in more reliable and consistent information technology governance, infrastructure, access, and support.

Process Improvement - my.sdsu. Centralized leadership helped shed light on SDSU's IT vulnerabilities that lead to process improvements. For instance, the SDSU's legacy student information system (SIS) presented an IT security risk and created a significant barrier to unified data reporting efforts across the CSU; and SDSU's homegrown financial aid systems, which distribute financial aid to approximately 60% of undergraduates, were at risk of being unable to grant financial aid reliably. A resulting noteworthy improvement, in 2019, SDSU's began migration from its legacy SIS to PeopleSoft Campus Solutions (CFR 3.4, 3.10, 4.2 and 4.4) .

Dubbed "my.SDSU," PeopleSoft Campus Solutions was launched at SDSU in 2021, and its implementation both brought SDSU into alignment with the CSU Chancellor's Office and supported WSCUC recommendations. Importantly, my.SDSU improves student experiences by offering a responsive and 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 empowered 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.

Admittedly, the multi-year transition to my.SDSU was challenging. While staff in IT, student affairs, and academic affairs worked to define the structure of the new SIS, the new system does not include many bespoke services 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 custom-built interfaces, and workflows that lack automation – issues that have led to increased complexity, workload, and delays for faculty, students, and staff. 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 front-line faculty and staff to address concerns prior to implementation, to support more effective change management, and to set realistic expectations for large-scale system rollouts.

Enhancements to Data Management. The second noteworthy improvement has been SDSU's enhancements to its data management capabilities housed within Analytic Studies and Institutional Research (ASIR) (CFR 3.10, 4.2, 4.4 and 4.5). Since 2015, ASIR has increased the content and usage of dynamic visualization resources to support data-informed decision-making. ASIR created dashboards to provide macro- and micro-level views of academic 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 generation, Pell status) to help identify predictors of and barriers to student success. To date, ASIR has delivered

over 800 dashboards to thousands of campus users. ASIR also provides pre-designed reports and self-service options so stakeholders can create custom reports for operational needs.

In addition, ASIR established a director of student success analytics role in 2021 and the director developed College Insights Reports (appendix 2.6) that provided deans with specific information on undergraduate student success challenges in their degree programs. ASIR helped academic units build out action plans (appendix 2.7) to improve student metrics. Moreover, ASIR administered targeted initiatives like the Data Champions Program (2017-20) to provide hands-on training on institutional data to faculty, advisors, administrators, and staff. Data Champions then created dozens of reports on topics such as, "Beyond the Gate-Count: Exploring Undergraduate Engagement with the SDSU Library." and "What Delays Student Graduation in Engineering?" to support improvement. 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.

In addition to the front-facing reporting enhancements, ASIR partnered with IT, Academic Affairs, Faculty Advancement and Human Resources 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 upon which publicly facing reports and internal dashboards are developed. In 2025, SDSU established the Data Governance Technical Working Group. This cross-divisional team drafted the first set of Data Governance Guidelines and is partnering with the CSU System office to explore central

data infrastructure solutions. Beyond these efforts, SDSU adopted multiple new platforms for improved student, faculty, and staff experiences (appendix 2.8).

Overall Impact. Over the last 10 years, IT and ASIR have evolved from technical support units to strategic partners in academic decision-making (CFR 1.7, 2.13 and 4.6). For example, IT engaged the campus community to evaluate how generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) can be responsibly and ethically used in the classroom. 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 at SDSU, 399 faculty and staff, and 1,401 students earned the AAAI micro-credential. SDSU's AI in Action video series, developed by faculty who participated in the AAAI micro-credential, provides examples of faculty members who use AI (e.g. to generate tailored thesis statements or to design integrated lesson plans that promote culturally responsive teaching). The student version of the AAAI micro-credential was introduced via the first-year seminar, and given the importance of engendering a deep understanding of the ethical impacts of AI usage, starting in fall 2025, completion of micro-credential will be an integral required component of the first year seminar. In 2024, SDSU collaborated with the CSU to create faculty and student versions of the AAAI micro-credential for system-wide use. By fall of 2025 in the CSU, 357 faculty and staff and 1,013 students completed the micro-credential; it is also available to 450,000+ CSU students.

Recommendation 3. Allocation of Faculty and Staff Positions, Faculty and Staff Development

In response to the 2016 WSCUC report, SDSU enhanced transparency in the allocation of positions and increased professional development opportunities (CFR 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3).

Allocation of Faculty and Staff positions. Starting with faculty, Academic Affairs supported collaborative decision-making by increasing consultations with Senate committees in the tenure/tenure-track (T/TT) hiring process. This transparency is especially important because, while historically retiring faculty lines were often replaced, since 2018 the university has been more intentional in hiring by treating faculty positions as critical strategic investments in student success. The approach recognizes changes in enrollment and the emergence of new academic programming necessitates commensurate shifts in T/TT hiring priorities (CFR 3.4).

Since fall 2016, SDSU has hired 300 T/TT faculty, increasing total full-time equivalent T/TT faculty from 726.5 to 820.2, a net gain of 93.7 positions. Most T/TT requests originate within academic units, as deans work with faculty to prioritize hiring needs. Following college-level discussions, deans, University Senate members, and academic affairs associate and assistant vice presidents review and rank positions (CFR 2.6). Using this information, the Senate Tenure-Track Planning committee makes recommendations to the provost who, after consulting with the president, determines hiring priorities. A smaller number of hires are allocated directly by senior leadership in response to time-sensitive curricular and accreditation needs and grant opportunities. See appendix 2.9 for examples.

Unfortunately, despite a net increase in tenure track positions, tenure density (i.e., total T/TT faculty full time equivalent divided by the sum of T/TT faculty and lecturer full time equivalent) has decreased by over six percentage points (61.6% in fall 2016 to 54.9% in fall 2024; appendix 2.10). While the campus is dissatisfied with the reduction in tenure density and will continue to try to resource as many T/TT lines as possible (CFR 1.2 and 3.1), 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.

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. Requests for new staff positions are prioritized by the Council of Vice Presidents and shared with the Senate committee on University Resources and Planning (URP) and PBAC for input. PBAC advises the president, who gives final approval. Between 2016-24, 165 new, base-funded staff positions and another 69 positions using one-time funds were approved. New student fees implemented following advice from the Campus Fee Advisory Committee (CFAC)–which is composed of faculty, staff, student, and administrative representatives– funded 79 staff positions between 2016-24, including 32 counselors and four academic advisors. Updated in 2023, participants on staff search committees also take implicit bias training (CFR 1.5, 3.1 and 3.2).

Unfortunately, the current hiring chill has moderated SDSU's progress towards increasing staff appointments. To mitigate the impact of the hiring chill on workload, the university is evaluating shared services models and technology tools. Academic Affairs piloted shared services in the College of Sciences related to purchasing and procurements. This staff realignment has improved the timeliness and effectiveness of business transactions. Evaluation and expansion of shared services in other campus departments, such as Business and Financial Affairs and Academic Affairs, is ongoing. Regarding technology, campus' adoption of an advising chat bot, for instance, helps advisors direct students to self-serve advising resources. Although just a few examples, the campus continues to look 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 (CFR 3.3 and 4.5). Although faculty and staff professional development opportunities come from all divisions, outlined in appendix 2.11, examples of two major infrastructure additions, one to support faculty and one to support staff, are presented below.

Faculty Professional Development, Division of Research and Innovation. SDSU enhanced faculty professional development support 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, including:

1. Course release - Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities (RSCA) Programs
2. $7,500 for new RSCA ideas - Seed Grant Program
3. $20,000 to support mature projects - Grants for Established RSCA Program

Within DRI, the Research Advancement Department (RAD) assists faculty and administrators to develop cooperative, multidisciplinary, and multi-institutional partnership programs. RAD also manages a diverse portfolio of sponsored projects, supports faculty in generating 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 helps faculty 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 DC 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 60% over the last three years, although changes in the federal political landscape led to a decrease in FY 24-25 to $200.8 million from $229.8 million in FY 23-24, a trend that is likely to continue in the near future.

The creation of DRI has helped SDSU manage changes to federal research funding following the 2024 presidential election. DRI keeps the campus updated on evolving federal research guidelines.In response to federal grant terminations affecting many SDSU faculty, DRI repurposed internal funds to provide up to $100,000 (with a 33% match) to help faculty closeout grants (e.g., ramping down clinical trial studies, writing final reports, etc.). DRI's quick pivot to redirect funds (appendix 2.12) has been critical in supporting faculty and illustrates how SDSU's strengthened research infrastructure positions it to better adapt to external stimuli.

Staff Professional Development, Staff Advancement, Leadership, and Development. While staff professional development is supported by all campus divisions, the creation of a Staff Advancement, Leadership and Development office and hiring of a dedicated manager in 2024 are key enhancements. 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, inclusive, and supportive developmental environment for staff employees throughout the university. These 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 employees in different occupations at various stages of their professional journeys.

Recommendation 4. Assessment and Student Success

The commission recommended SDSU improve its assessment of student learning. In 2020, Academic Affairs created the office of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accreditation (CAA) led by an associate vice president and, in 2021, hired an assessment analyst to facilitate assessment. Shortly thereafter, Student Affairs and Campus Diversity hired a director of Program Evaluation, Compliance, and Assessment (PECA) to assess the effectiveness of co-curricular

programming. This approach recognizes the interdependence of curricular and co-curricular activities to student learning and provides a holistic understanding of students' needs.

Assessment infrastructure within Academic Affairs. In 2018, SDSU determined that faculty were dissatisfied with its program assessment management platform, WEAVE, and discontinued its use, adopting *Nuventive* as its replacement after the pandemic (CFR 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5). To support programs, the analyst helped streamline the assessment process by facilitating the integration of *Nuventive* with SDSU's learning management system (Canvas) so that course-embedded assessments can be more easily exported to *Nuventive* for analysis and action. Academic Affairs also created a director of continuous improvement position in 2023 and hired an assessment librarian in 2024. The director works closely with faculty to embed assessment activities into courses, develop measurement techniques, and implement informed actions to strengthen student learning and development. The librarian oversees data collection, reporting, and analysis of existing library and university data sources for institutional surveys and library reports. Together, these efforts are geared towards changing campus culture toward a more positive view of assessment.

These efforts have been successful and programs have been much more willing to engage in assessment. SDSU's complete assessment overview is located in appendix 2.13 and shows that all bachelor's and graduate programs have learning outcomes, 83% of these programs have assessment results, and several programs have made curriculum changes in response to assessment results (CFR 2.7, 2.9 and 4.6). The university celebrates assessment excellence via the university's "Assessment Allstars." While SDSU is pleased with the campus' more positive view of assessment and the significant participation in its assessment program, the university strives for full participation in assessment and will continue to work with faculty and chairs to

promote the use of program assessment as an integral tool for supporting student success and evaluating program effectiveness.

Facilitating Academic Assessment Participation Across Campuses. In addition to undergraduate programs, SDSU assesses GE, graduate programs, and degree offerings at SDSU Imperial Valley and SDSU Global Campus. The Senate Student Learning Outcomes and Program Assessment Committee (SLOPAC) members support annual assessment of core lower-division GE courses (communication, critical thinking, and quantitative measures, CFR 2.2 and 2.9) and facilitate assessment of upper-division GE courses within their colleges (appendix 2.14). SDSU Imperial Valley and SDSU Global Campus use assessment results to understand how programs can support workforce needs. To improve graduate education, the university created a standalone College of Graduate Studies in fall 2021 with its own dean. Since the inception of the College of Graduate Studies, 83% of graduate programs are engaging in assessment (appendix 2.13) and making improvements. For example, the Homeland Security M.S. program streamlined learning outcomes to align with industry training and provided greater support for post-graduation student success.

Other forms of continuous improvement within Academic Affairs. In addition to internal program assessment, SDSU prioritized the external review of academic degrees (CFR 2.4 and 4.1) and between 2020-25, 86% of academic programs were reviewed. To ensure a more meaningful review process, in 2023, SDSU reimagined the program self-study guidelines to adopt a conversational tone, enabling departments to "tell their story" by using analysis of student and faculty success metrics in open-ended narrative. Furthermore, the university ensures timely external reviews by using two-day reviews for departments and streamlined processes for reviews of interdisciplinary programs and standalone graduate programs.

Overall program evaluation was supported by a CSU mandate that campuses evaluate programs with low conferral degrees (LCD), defined as ten or fewer students graduating annually in undergraduate programs and five or fewer students graduating annually in graduate programs. In response, SDSU asked programs who met the LCD criteria to consider options for improvement. Departments adopted various strategies to address LCD, including sunsetting majors, consolidating tracks within majors, removing structural impediments to student engagement (e.g., unnecessary prerequisites), or increasing focus on more clearly conveying the major's contribution to workforce development. For instance, the B.A. 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 CSU 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 PECA office with a director and an assessment analyst. In the past, assessment of Student Affairs programs has largely consisted of collecting participation data; while useful, those metrics have not been systemically connected to specific outcomes such as student success, well-being and inclusion. To begin addressing this, PECA created and implemented an assessment plan to measure co-curricular outcomes and align program-level assessments with SDSU's strategic plan and campus values. In June 2024, over 130 SACD staff members attended Data Camp, a full-day program providing resources for planning assessments and program outcomes. Participants were led through a backward design process to identify which institutional goals their programs aimed to support, how they could determine whether their programs were actually addressing those goals, and what evidence they have, or could

collect, to show impact. Over the ensuing year, SACD inventoried its 600+ programs and created a dashboard to visualize program alignment with the institutional goals. These data help guide decision-making and advance cross-unit collaboration as SDSU increases activities to support student career preparedness, health and safety, and student success (CFR 2.13, 2.14 and 4.3).

In order to better assess holistic student outcomes in particular, PECA also oversees the administration of the Well-being Improvement Survey for Higher Education Settings (WISHES). With three years of data collection, and nearly 19,000 student responses, WISHES provides SDSU with previously unobserved perspectives regarding student well-being, fiscal concerns, sense of belonging, and health and safety issues, including drug and alcohol use (CFR 2.14 and 4.3). For instance, sophomores disproportionately report struggling with issues of belonging and have lower excitement about academic engagement. In response, SDSU used these data as part of its ongoing residential assessment efforts to develop a support network and outlet where approximately 3,600 sophomores living in campus residential communities could express their concerns and needs. The longitudinal nature of the data will allow SDSU to better assess whether such programs are achieving their intended aims. The SACD data strategy, WISHES Dashboard, 2022-23 WISHES Report, and presentation (appendix 2.15) provide more information on how SDSU uses WISHES insights.

Prioritizing Outcomes of Greatest Concern. Finally, the commission's recommendation to prioritize outcomes of greatest concern (e.g., student success in high DFW courses) aligns with a system-wide initiative to eliminate equity gaps and improve undergraduate graduation rates known as Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025), and spurred SDSU to increase the use of evidence-based programming to support students and provide greater support within the university library (CFR 4.5). ASIR provided analysis of student success metrics for the

university and specific to each college (appendix 2.6) that included actionable data and allowed SDSU to create targeted interventions.

For example, data showed SDSU's first-year math courses (MATH 120, 140, 141, 150) are challenging for students. To address this, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides workshops focused on inclusive pedagogical practices for faculty who teach high DFW classes. CTL has also led three grant-supported efforts focused on first-year math in partnership with faculty from SDSU's Center for Research on Math and Science Education:

1) Math Equity Initiative: A two-year, wide ranging informal institutional self-study with additional, targeted summer outreach and AY advising for equity-identified pre-STEM first year students. Out of the funded pilot, an ongoing system of campus-wide coordination around critical first-year math issues has evolved and continued, extending to cooperation between academic support services and instructional teams and inclusion of advising perspectives in academic initiatives.
2) Learning Lab ($100,000): Targeted professional development for first-year math instructors, near-peer role models, support courses, active learning, and advising/mentoring, with a goal of addressing the GPA equity gaps. Out of the funded pilot grew a commitment by the Math and Statistics department to hire tenure-track and "clinical scholar" faculty focused on first-year math instruction.
3) CO "Equity Priority 5" ($73,000): Supported a series of "light-touch" student-engagement interventions that target 1) attendance and active learning, 2) growth mindset and meta-cognition, 3) sense of belonging and support, and 4) career-relevance. Out of the pilot grew a long-term commitment by tenured research faculty to teach and renovate first-year courses, especially Math 120 serving business majors.

Students are also given greater opportunities to discover and benefit from investments in student success programs through strategic partnerships between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs located in the University Library. Over the past decade, SDSU's library has housed programs such as the Writing, Math and Science Learning, Latinx Resource, and Esports Engagement Centers, and has developed stronger partnerships between the library and student health and wellness programs.

Overall, through organizational changes and resource alignment, SDSU has built a foundation for assessment practices that–through continued and dedicated support from the university–can be carried forward as SDSU adapts to changing student needs. Creating CAA and PECA and hiring a critical mass of analysts, directors, a librarian and other staff are significant infrastructure changes that position the university to continue to improve student learning, development, and support.

Conclusions

The 2016 WSCUC recommendations coupled with the strategic planning process, new system-wide policies, and budgetary challenges provided the impetus for necessary change. Over the last decade, SDSU has adapted and evolved by creating infrastructure that supports sustainable improvement (CFR 4.8). 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

Supporting the success of all students is central to the 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 student success focus to include expanding access to higher education for underrepresented groups and recognizing that a holistic approach to student support spans well beyond developing educational skills and includes supporting students' mental health and basic needs, career readiness and professional development to strengthen post-graduation success and increase their ROI, and co-curricular activities that promote psychosocial development and resilience (CFR 1.2, 2.10, 2.11 and 2.13). Below is a synopsis of specific activities within the 2020 strategic plan:

- Broaden access to affordable, high-quality education for our region and beyond.
- Ensure that the campus community is prepared to advance student success by deepening the quality of learning and closing equity gaps.
- 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 readiness and support pathways to graduate studies.
- 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 student support resources 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.

In fall 2024, the CSU initiated its "Year of Engagement" campaign to expand student success metrics to include student physical and mental wellness, belonging, and post-graduation outcomes. This essay details the myriad ways in which SDSU has been fulfilling its strategic

plan (CFR 4.8) and the more recent system-wide campaign, with a focus on 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 and support 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

SDSU has long been committed to expanding access to education and helping students view college as a realistic and attainable option (CFR 1.1). 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 (CFR 4.5 and 4.8). The university provides guidance to local school districts on how best to prepare students for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), a test that measures readiness for college-level English and mathematics. SDSU provides tutoring, mentoring, guidance, and career exploration to students enrolled in high schools located in

disadvantaged communities and 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 how SDSU's commitment to expanding educational access is manifest and successful with program details provided in appendix 3.1.

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 currently receiving federal Pell Grants.
Educational Opportunity Programs, Outreach and Success (EOPOS)	Early Assessment Program	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 below on college readiness metrics).
Institute for Transformative Education	Upward Bound (UB)	Mentoring, tutoring, and career exploration in target districts.	Increased application volumes in seven of nine targeted high schools since 2020.
College of Engineering	YSP-REACH Summer Camp	Two-week neuroengineering/STEM research with AR/VR and ethics modules.	Expanded since 2015 to include presentations; student skill-building.
College of Engineering	MESA Program	Research placements, STEM exposure, Femineer™, MESA Day, Shadow Day, SOLAR Academy, Women in Engineering	From 2015 to 2024, female engineering enrollment increased from 17% to 22% and URM increased from 26% to 37% .

Improving Equitable Admissions. For over 20 years, SDSU has partnered with high schools in some of the most impoverished areas of San Diego and Imperial counties through compact agreements that support college readiness and 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 (CFR 2.10). Updates, listed in table 3, include preferred math tracks by major and added career advising.

Table 3: Initiatives for Improving Admissions Pipelines

Program/Initiative	Partner(s)	Focus/Objective	Key Features	Updates / Impact
Compact for Success	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
College Avenue Compact	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
MOU: SDSU Imperial Valley–Calexico	Calexico Union School District	Access for underserved Imperial County students	Pipeline to SDSU IV; targeted support for low bachelor's attainment region	Contributed to record SDSU 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 (EMAG) recommended combining traditional metrics (e.g., 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 who were previously admitted through the multifactor review model set a new institutional record with a 4-year graduation rate of 62%. There is the potential for subsequent classes to achieve even higher graduation rates, as continuation rates and student GPAs have progressively increased.

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 to support successful applications, and creating programs to help community college students successfully transition to campus (CFR 2.12). 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 such errors, the university developed new programs to identify prospective transfer students earlier in the admissions process and provide 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
STEM Pathways	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
NextGen 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
Kumeyaay Community College Admissions Guarantee	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)

Transfer Success Pathway (TSP)	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
EOPOS	Economically disadvantaged Students	Includes an EOP Transfer Bridge Program (TBP), an intensive transitional program offered during the summer prior to the beginning of the fall semester to newly admitted EOP 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 incoming students. Total enrollment, enrollment from local high schools, and student preparation metrics all show improvement 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%
Total URM Graduate Enrollment	1,236	1,878	+52%
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, 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 supporting access to four-year institutions.

Table 6: Improvements in College Readiness Metrics Across Local Region

	% 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 (CFR 3.4 and 3.6). For instance, the university is aware that it could and should 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 a Public-Private Partnership model, allowing the university to attract investment toward delivering 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 SDSU Mission Valley. 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 new Millenia Library for $1 annually, enabling SDSU to bring long-sought higher education opportunities, like Nursing

classes, to the South Bay area within a limited budgetary environment. Internationally, SDSU's Oaxaca Center for Mesoamerican Studies, located in Oaxaca, Mexico, supports indigenous language instruction in Mixtec and Zapotec, an ethnographic field school to engage students in real-world research on topics such as traditional food systems, community health, and a global health internship. These strategic initiatives, detailed in appendix 1.3, underscore SDSU's commitment to educational access (CFR 1.1) but highlight the need for new programming, if possible, to be formed in partnership with outside entities to support program sustainability.

Academic Student Success

Once students are admitted to SDSU, the university's priority is to ensure they succeed. SDSU regularly updates student support interventions through extensive feedback mechanisms, including strategic planning conversations, program reviews and assessment, graduation initiatives, and analysis of student success metrics (CFR 2.9, 2.10 and 4.1). This feedback helped motivate numerous structural interventions (documented in appendix 3.2): highlighted below are the new Undergraduate Coordinated Care advising model and adjustments to academic policy.

Equity-Minded Advising and Support. Student feedback through an Associated Students survey highlighted their strong preference for personalized academic advising. In response and through a significant investment, in 2021, SDSU hired twenty additional major advisors and developed and implemented a "Campuswide Coordinated Care Plan for Student Success" (appendix 3.3), a joint effort by Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. While the initial advising hires allowed SDSU to achieve a 1:300 advisor:student ratio as recommended by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), unfortunately recent enrollment growth has reduced advising support. When feasible, SDSU will prioritize hiring advisors but, in the meanwhile, has funded a supplemental advising help desk and created AI tools to support student

needs. While not a substitute for additional staff advisors, the help desk and AI tools help students navigate course selection and aid student success.

The Coordinated Care plan assigns all first- and second-year undergraduates a Coordinated Care Advisor (CCA) who helps students transition to the university and serves as their main contact for advising support (CFR 2.3, 2.12 and 2.13). CCAs help students develop graduation plans and navigate university procedures. In addition, the Coordinated Care plan places all first-year undergraduate students in a one-unit first-year seminar (FYS) to aid development of metacognitive success tools in a small cohort, collaborative, dynamic seminar designed to foster a sense of social, academic, and institutional belonging. Many of these seminars take place in the context of SDSU's ten community centers (i.e., APIDA Center, 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 provide academic and personal support as well as opportunities for community building. Students in their junior year transition to an advisor in their major academic department, who advise on upper-division course selection.

The new advising infrastructure allows SDSU to conduct proactive outreach to students in academic precarity (CFR 4.2). This innovative approach was first piloted in fall 2020, in response to concerns about first-year student success during the COVID-19 epidemic. 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-in with these students by phone. SACD's New Student and Parent Programs (NSPP) team also leads an initiative to help students placed on academic notice. Campus partners, including Advising and Evaluations, Office of the Registrar, Educational Opportunity Program,

Counseling and Psychological Services, and academic departments worked together to proactively send communication, which consisted of phone and email outreach, and dissemination of video tutorials to students. Building on this, small group advising workshops ensure students have a general understanding of the academic notice and course forgiveness policy, and individual advising sessions assess each student's situation holistically. Students are also pre-registered in a one-unit, small group Bounce Back seminar, which focuses on building resilience skills, led by an individual from Counseling and Psychological Services.

Another use of proactive outreach was initiated in November 2021 when NSPP reached out to more than 1,500 first- and second-year students who had not enrolled in spring classes. NSPP 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.). Advisors also contacted undeclared students with more than 70 semester units to help them determine an intentional academic pathway to a meaningful degree. The Undeclared Student Success team provides advising tools and resources, targeted student outreach for academic support, year-round nudges to support students into a degree pathway, and partners with academic departments to connect students to major and college resources. The program has helped students find academic homes: from fall 2021 to fall 2023, the number of students who held 70+ units in undeclared status decreased by 47%. Finally, advisors also reach out to students who do not register for classes or are enrolled in fewer than 15 units. For these students, advisors encourage 15 unit enrollment or provide information on the campus' Leave of Absence guidelines. During a student's leave, SACD completes outreach by connecting students to campus resources to help them develop a re-enrollment plan.

The Coordinated Care proactive advising structure also allowed SDSU to take full advantage of the CSU Chancellor's Office (CO) 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 CO funding, SDSU re-enrolled 142 students through individualized outreach and awarded $770,411 in scholarship funds.

Advising efforts are supported by SDSU's implementation of SDSU Navigate in 2020 (CFR 3.10). Staff and faculty across SDSU use Navigate to communicate with undergraduates via email and text, schedule and manage student appointments, document interactions with students (which are viewable by other advisors and faculty), refer students for services or care, and access reporting and data analytics. 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. SDSU Navigate empowers faculty and staff to issue alerts for students of concern, connects students to advisors or campus resources, and is far superior to the previously *ad hoc* approach to tracking advising meetings and other student communications.

To begin evaluating the effectiveness of the Coordinated Care model, during the 2024-25 academic year, the university engaged in an assessment of the Coordinated Care program through a CO-supported and NACADA-facilitated "Excellence in Academic Advising" evaluation. SDSU stakeholders wrote a self-study, received a report by NACADA consultants (appendix 3.4; CFR 4.5), and created a university-wide action plan for improvement grounded in NACADA's recommendations, including adopting a digital planner and AI advising support tools, and holding regular meetings with advisors and other university leadership. In addition, the 2025 GE task force's focus groups with upper division major advisors revealed that there remains confusion in some colleges about the distribution of advising responsibilities for GE

classes. The task force is expected, by December 2026, to recommend process and communication improvements to better GE advising within the Coordinated Care model.

Examining Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Policies. Over the last decade, the university analyzed policies that may unintentionally hinder student progress to degree and also uncovered other opportunities for improvement when systems were upgraded. From these observations, the university made changes to academic policy to support student success. Overall, while many of these individual adjustments could be considered small interventions, the cumulative impact has reduced student barriers to success (CFR 1.5 and 2.6). Table 7 summarizes the policy changes discussed in this section while appendix 3.5 documents other process improvements.

Table 7: Select SDSU Policy Changes Supporting Student Success

Change Area	Summary of Change	Implementation Term	Impact
Timing of Tuition Payment	Transitioned to a post-pay tuition model	Fall 2022	Mitigated financial barriers for students
Registration Timeline	Advanced fall registration to April	2017-18	Increased opportunity for consultation with advisors before course selection
Course Schedule Planning	Release full academic year schedules prior to spring registration	2017-18	Enhanced students' ability to plan effectively and improved course availability management
General Education Policy	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	Permitted use of American Institution course from different majors	Fall 2024	Provided increased flexibility in academic planning and scheduling
Writing Requirement	Integrated upper-division writing courses into major curricula	Fall 2022	Supported timely graduation while ensuring tailored writing instruction

Attendance & Religious Observance	Increased procedural fairness to accommodate religious observance	Fall 2023	Promoted student-centered practices and inclusive learning environments
Academic Standing Terminology	Reframed "academic probation" to "academic notice"	Spring 2024	Normalized help-seeking behavior and reduced stigma
Graduation Process	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 their tuition payment were often unable to register for needed 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 supported by tuition waivers were also required to make tuition payments and then 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 making a tuition payment.

Similarly, prior to AY 2017-18, continuing students registered for fall classes staggered throughout the prior 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 demand.

The university also initiated several student-centered policy updates geared toward reducing small pressure points that can hinder student success. SDSU reexamined the sequencing

of its American Institutions classes and changed policy to allow students to take upper-division GE classes earlier in their college careers, providing students greater flexibility in course selection and aiding progress to degree. Similarly, before 2021, SDSU allowed students to test out of the upper-division graduation writing requirement. However, because the CSU adopted a policy that prohibited the use of high stakes exams, and SDSU's writing exam was considered high stakes, the university initially adjusted by just making all students take an upper-division writing class. A more careful analysis, however, indicated that for some students, these added units delayed graduation. SDSU responded by building upper-division writing classes into majors, supporting graduation rates and providing students with tailored writing instruction.

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 is being enacted starting 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 is now better able to 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 2021 of a stand-alone College of Graduate Studies was motivated by the university's recognition that it needed to do more to support graduate education and since its creation, the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) has identified

gaps and implemented several improvements to support graduate students. These improvements include aligning responsibilities for stateside employment to best match hiring classifications (which led to an increase in monthly pay for most), supporting 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 (CFR 3.1 and 3.2). 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 (appendix 3.5, CFR 2.13 and 2.14) and launched regular outreach to graduate advisors and faculty who mentor students. The Graduate Council also prepared guidance documents (appendix 3.6) to help foster a supportive environment for graduate student success and promote high standards for graduate student research and creative activities. Graduate enhancements are summarized in table 8.

Table 8: Graduate Education Enhancements at SDSU

Change Area	Summary of Change	Impact
Graduate Student Funding	-Hired a graduate employment 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 (CORE fellowship).	Enhanced financial equity and competitiveness of graduate support packages and remove financial barriers to the completion of graduate culminating experiences, thus improving time to degree

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

Outcomes. While many of these policy and curriculum adjustments may seem small, the cumulative effect of these, and other interventions documented in appendix 3.5, have helped improve SDSU student success metrics as described in 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 (CFR 2.10) and the six-year graduation rate for the 2017 first-time, full-time freshman cohort was 78.3%, *the highest ever rate*. In addition, also noted in table 9, equity gaps have also 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.

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)		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 remains committed to an ongoing evaluation of its academic support structures to ensure they evolve in alignment with system-level priorities and emerging federal mandates for higher education. The university will continue to refine and evaluate structural frameworks, including first-year seminars and proactive individualized advising to strengthen student success from the start of their time at SDSU. While SDSU will sustain efforts to enhance first-year retention, which is already historically high, Phase II improvements will focus on enhancing the student experience in the second year and beyond. This includes a thoughtful examination of administrative processes and institutional barriers that may unintentionally complicate students' academic paths, produce less optimal student outcomes, or delay progress toward degree completion. At the same time, SDSU recognizes that its support 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 to ensure that every student benefits from a coherent network of support. For graduate students, SDSU will continue to expand mentoring resources that foster both scholarly and professional growth. As new independent and applied doctoral programs are established, the university acknowledges the need to increase administrative staffing and capacity and build a sustainable infrastructure for doctoral programs in order to ensure consistency, quality, and long-term viability.

Holistic Well-being

While academic support is undeniably valuable, the student success metrics highlighted above are also boosted by SDSU's efforts to support students outside of the classroom (CFR 2.13 and 2.14). SDSU's comprehensive approach addresses multiple contributors to well-being and is integrated across several offices and programs. For example, meeting students' basic needs, including access to food, housing, and health services, is the focus of the University's Basic Needs Center and Economic Crisis Response Team, which work in collaboration with Counseling and Psychological Services. 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 support from the Cal Coast Financial Center and the Office of Housing Administration. 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 support 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 but they were situated in various offices around campus and lacked visibility, making it difficult for students to get the support they needed. Counseling and Psychological Services was also under-staffed, with a student-counselor ratio significantly above national standards, and there was very little support for students at the Imperial Valley campus. In response to the goals set out in the campus Strategic Plan, efforts thus focused both on expanding

services and on centralizing and coordinating programs to help connect students with relevant resources, particularly via the SDSU Basic Needs Center (CFR 1.2, 2.13, 3.6 and 4.3). The breadth and scope of these programs are detailed in table 11.

Table 11: Offices and Programs Supporting Basic Needs

Program	Description	Services
SDSU Basic Needs Center	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: ● Basic Needs Kit program ● Transportation Assistance Application (for support with parking permits and public transit passes) ● CalFresh and Medi-Cal enrollment onsite ● Supplemental Grocery Assistance Program ● Fee Relief Grants
Associated Students' Aztecs Rock Hunger	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.
Counseling and Psychological Services (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 Center for Well-Being. The Psychiatric Crisis Assessment Response Team utilizes mental health providers in collaboration with the University Police Department for emergency situations.
CARES (Campus Assistance, Response, Evaluation and Support) 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	Student Wellness and Success Center opened 2025	Student Success & Retention Center: 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 support and 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 (appendix 2.13) and creating an additional obstacle to student success (CFR 4.3). 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) has been critical in those efforts, serving as a one-stop shop for financial literacy, assistance with financial aid, and student account and billing (table 11). 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% 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 support focused on student success, leading to a 250% increase in dollars raised for scholarships and other student support between 2017 and 2023 (CFR 3.5).

Financial stress for students is exacerbated by the difficulty students face in finding affordable housing in the San Diego housing market. To help, SDSU's Office of Housing Administration leads efforts to provide additional housing through new construction and master leases (table 12; CFR 3.4). Most recently, construction began on new projects that will add thousands of undergraduate beds by summer 2027, including 40 affordable housing beds at SDSU Imperial Valley, 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) available for graduate students. However, with 107 graduate students on the AY 2025-26 waitlist for these beds, it is clear that more support is needed and SDSU is working to expand graduate student housing options.

Table 12: Offices and Programs Providing Financial and Housing Support

Program	Description	Services
SDSU Cal Coast Student Financial Center (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 i-Grad, a no-cost financial wellness tool.

University Library	The Library provides financial literacy resources 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 first day of class.
Economic Crisis Response Team (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 also offered below market rate housing for graduate students by reserving 11 two- and three-unit bedroom apartments in a complex just off campus. Given the high demand (e.g., 107 graduate students were on the AY 2025-26 waitlist for 23 beds), SDSU is working to expand similar graduate student housing options.
Office of Housing Administration (OHA)	Works to address student housing demand through new construction, master leases to provide more affordable housing options.	Over the past ten years, OHA has added 3,750 beds for undergraduates (1,500 through new construction, 2,250 through master leases); the Evolve project 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.	For instance, in 2022-23, the university raised $13.5M for scholarships and other student support, an increase of 250% since 2017 (CFR 3.5). For example, in 2024, the Black Resource Center received a $5 million 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 (CFR 1.2 and 2.13). Most first-year students (including transfers) are placed 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-semester small cohort General Studies 100 course, and an assigned CCA. 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 (CCL) is an essential resource for supporting 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 (CFR 1.2 and 4.3).

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
SDSU Community Centers	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 ten 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 Heritage Month celebrations.
Allyship seminars	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.
"First-Gen" (First-Generation) Student	These programs provide support for first-generation	Each of these programs offers mentoring, academic advising and

Success, Guardian Scholars in EOP, the Center for Commuter Life (CCL), and the Military and Veterans Programs (MVP) housed in the Joan and Art Barron Veterans Center	students, current or former foster youth, commuter students, and veterans and military-affiliated students, respectively.	support, and community-building events, as well as population-specific resources. For example, the Commuter Student Success Pathways 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 specific support for graduate students is based in the Office for Graduate Life and Diversity (GLaD), created in 2021 (CFR 2.14). Funded by the Graduate Student Experience Program fee (GSEP), GLaD provides additional programming geared towards helping students maximize their educational experiences. The GSEP fee enables students to access writing support, 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 retain limited access to GLaD services (e.g. students can still 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 to support their health and wellness throughout their course of study. The program provides students direct support 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 the infrastructure supporting student success and well-being (CFR 4.8). 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 (C&PS) to provide coordinated mental health response and prevention. In addition, the university remains committed to supporting students facing housing insecurity and homelessness, including the development of SDSU's new Evolve Project, targeted for launch in 2026. The SACD Data Camp initiative continues to help offices identify overlaps in support services, strengthen collaboration, and better connect outcomes to WISHES survey data, 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 financial insecurity, academic stress, and limited access to mental health and professional development resources. Strengthening student support services through expanded advising, mentorship, and wellness programming will be critical and positions the university to proactively navigate the evolving social and political landscape following the 2024 election. The divisive national context underscores the need for even more intentional and inclusive support systems that encourage conversations, promote belonging and well-being among the entire student body.

Increasing Career Readiness

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 support 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 ROI of an SDSU education and the success of students in securing post-graduate employment in their desired career paths is relevant to students 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 Calexico – 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 (CFR 2.11 and 4.5).

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 (CFR 2.13 and 2.14). Career Services' 2023 three-year strategic plan (appendix 3.7) concentrates on preparing students for the workforce (CFR 2.11) by committing to improve industry engagement with SDSU, tailoring services to the needs of regional partners, helping SDSU become a community leader in regional

workforce development, supporting SDSU staff professional 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 resume and cover letter workshops, interview preparation, and career coaching, with activities tailored to meet student needs.

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

1. Opportunity Young Adult (approximately $2M) – funded by the Employment Development Department (EDD). 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. SDSU is one of only seven universities supported due to its innovative approach to career services.
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.

SDSU additionally heads a team of campuses, including East Bay and Sacramento State, on grant projects of approximately $4M to support career services in the CSU. It also aided the industry research effort that informed Governor Newsom's Executive Order on the California Master Plan for Career Education for which SDSU led, secured, and analyzed responses from over 2,100 employers statewide to better understand how industry wants to engage with education.

A data informed approach to understanding barriers to workforce transition. Indeed, 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 (CFR 2.11, 4.3 and 4.8). 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 and that over two-thirds of the student population searched for work during the academic year. To address these findings, Career Services launched an annual Black Resource Center Career Fair, created an "On-Campus Jobs" career fair to inform students about on-campus employment opportunities, provided virtual advising on evenings and weekends to expand access to students who work during the day, transitioned from offering approximately six career fairs annually across 4-5 months to hosting over 20 career fairs year-round, and expanded operations to include nine industry liaisons. These efforts have been successful with approximately 83% of graduating undergraduate students reporting 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 (CFR 1.2).

Career Services also works collaboratively with local, national, and global employers to create internship and job opportunities (CFR 4.5 and 4.8), and this strategic approach not only equips students with the skills and experiences required for immediate employment, but also fosters long-term career success. A notable example of this approach, in 2025 SDSU hosted a

summit connecting employers with educators to strengthen the link between education and workforce development. The workshop, "Together We Rise. Bridging Educators and Employers: Strengthening Partnerships" (appendix 3.8) connected SDSU Career Services and other university leadership with over 200 individuals representing local employers and provided a forum for joint discussions on ways to benefit students through curriculum development, mentorship programs, and work-based learning opportunities. The university will use the feedback from the workshop to refine curriculum and encourage more work-based learning opportunities within curriculum to support post-graduation outcomes.

It is significant, but not surprising, 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 appendix 3.9). Overall, while Career Services has made significant strides over the past four years, working to build support capacity despite funding limitations, the university aims to support all students' career aspirations. As such, 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. Just as important, and admittedly lacking in Phase I, Phase II includes targeted initiatives through Career Services to support graduate student career readiness.

Academic Affairs. Academic Affairs also aims to support student career aspirations but also recognizes it can do a better job connecting the skills employers within the curriculum. For instance, and still underway, the 2025 GE task force is working to integrate into the GE curriculum language on how GE courses support skills development. In addition, some degree programs are already incorporating career language directly into their curriculum. For instance,

in Fall 2023, about half of the first-year seminars (FYS), 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 program updated its core curriculum starting in AY 2024-25 to guide students through course-supported explorations of interdisciplinary problem-solving as a workforce asset, internships, and career-envisioned capstone projects. In 2025, the College of Arts and Letters 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 from early career alumni, faculty doing research 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 both that the program has tapped an unmet need and that Academic Affairs should develop more opportunities for students' to engage in post-graduation conversations.

For graduate students, 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 (Education, Health and Human Services, Professional Studies and Fine Arts, and Sciences, for example) 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, Master of Social Work, Master of Science in Early Childhood & Family Clinical Counseling, to name a few). More broadly, SDSU's College of Graduate Studies, in collaboration with seven other CSU campuses, secured a grant to expand co-curricular programming to address career competencies. The campuses developed (through SDSU's lead instructional designer) an asynchronous course called "The Next Step: Graduate Professional Development" which contains eight modules (one for each of NACE's career competencies), has badging for each competency, and a career readiness microcredential for completion of the entire course that will be available for free to all 50K+ CSU graduate students.

Career Readiness, Workforce Development, and the Imperial Valley. The Imperial Valley expansion is a prime example of SDSU's approach towards workforce development using data-informed strategies and initiatives (CFR 3.4, 4.2 and 4.3). As part of the strategic plan, the university invested $15M in IV since 2018, hiring new faculty (up from 16 to 28 TT faculty between 2017-2025), and reinstating four-year degree programs. Prior to developing degree programs, SDSU consulted with numerous industry experts and conducted workforce studies to determine which degrees would be most useful for the emerging Lithium Valley initiative, ultimately creating programs in Engineering, Chemistry, Nursing, Public Health-Environmental Health, and Social Work. SDSU's efforts were timely. Renewed emphasis on extracting the Salton Sea's lithium reserves – an estimated $540B worth – placed SDSU in an enviable spot of being the only four-year university serving the Imperial Valley and, in large part because of SDSU's focus on workforce development in the area, the state allocated SDSU $80M to build a

STEM building on the IV campus. The state's investment in the IV campus may not have occurred without SDSU's data-rich analysis of community workforce needs.

Looking Ahead. Supporting students' career readiness will remain a significant feature of SDSU's mission (CFR 1.1, 1.2, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.8). 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 use of labor market information to inform decision-making and aligning and integrating SDSU's student support efforts with the region's community colleges and workforce development boards to enhance the campuses' career service frameworks. The Innovation District in Mission Valley will work with industry partners to ensure SDSU trains students to meet workforce demands. New independent doctoral program proposals need to 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 expand support for graduate students. Graduate Studies is also drafting guidance for construction of program-level professional development plans, with the overall goal of scaffolding programming and other graduate-centric offerings through Career Services in Phase II of the strategic plan. Academic Affairs' focus on career development as a unified approach is, admittedly, in the early stages of development. In addition to initiatives noted earlier, starting in Fall 2026, the university catalog includes space for programs to describe career relevance along with its program description. The 2025 GE task force is working to include career language with GE goals in the catalog as well and individual programs continue to develop curriculum in support of post graduation outcomes.

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 the university information on the post graduation path of over 100,000 alumni. Since Fall 2025, college deans are in the beginning stages of using this information to help evaluate programs and improve student support. In late Fall 2025, the university received its "Value of Degree" report from Lightcast. The report found that for every dollar invested in 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 San Diego State University undergraduate gains an average of $10.2 dollars in lifetime earnings. This significant 10.2:1 cost benefit ratio supports SDSU's Carnegie designation as an Opportunity University and provides a baseline understanding of the value of an SDSU degree. The university will use this information to inform future decisions and plan for improvements (appendix 3.10).

Reflections

Reflections Summary (to be further edited/informed by the survey and reflections)

The WSCUC reaffirmation process prompted San Diego State University (SDSU) to deeply examine its strengths, challenges, and future direction. As the university refines its priorities under Phase II of its strategic plan, it faces a fundamental question: how can SDSU sustain its distinctive integration of research excellence, social mobility, and undergraduate education within the constraints of California's funding model? Despite enduring state disinvestment, political volatility, and pandemic disruptions, SDSU has demonstrated extraordinary resilience and achievement in sustaining its mission, completing its goals and fulfilling its promises to the regional community.

Faculty and staff commitment have been central to these successes. Over the past decade, SDSU has improved nearly every metric of student success, research, and philanthropy, earning R1 status—a rare accomplishment and the first and only CSU institution with the designation. More notably, SDSU stands among only three universities nationwide to hold R1, HSI, AANAPISI, and Community Engagement designations while maintaining its role as an "Opportunity University." Compared to peers with significantly greater resources, SDSU's outcomes reflect a culture of dedication and overperformance.

The reaffirmation also highlighted substantial institutional growth in data-informed decision-making and organizational agility. New infrastructure—including assessment offices in both Academic and Student Affairs and Campus Diversity, enhanced career support structures, and the creation of a unified OneIT division—has improved coordination, assessment, and adaptability. Collaboration between divisions has strengthened holistic student support and strategic integration across the university.

However, budgetary challenges pose a serious threat to sustaining this momentum. The CSU system's chronic underfunding and redistribution model penalizes institutions like SDSU that continue to grow in enrollment. Recent grant losses totaling $32 million and economic uncertainty further strain resources. Faculty and staff, already stretched thin, face limits to the "do more with less" approach that has long characterized SDSU's culture. The institution must now reconsider its capacity and possibly recalibrate its ambitions within fiscal reality.

Moving forward, SDSU is exploring a multifaceted funding strategy—expanding revenue generation, reassessing initiatives through shared governance, and identifying programs that best serve its mission. While fiscal constraints demand hard choices, SDSU remains committed to its foundational goals: advancing educational access, ensuring student success, promoting research

and creative activity, and deepening community engagement. The reaffirmation process reaffirmed not only the university's achievements but also the need for strategic clarity, sustainability, and renewed support for the people driving its mission.

Reflections Summary (bullet points):

- **Reflective process:** The WSCUC reaffirmation prompted SDSU to assess its strengths and challenges, guiding priorities for the next phase of its strategic plan.
- **Distinct mission:** SDSU's unique blend of research excellence, social mobility, and strong undergraduate and graduate education distinguishes it within the CSU system.
- **High achievement despite limited resources:** The university has excelled in research, student success, and fundraising—earning R1 status—thanks to the extraordinary dedication and innovation of its faculty and staff.
- **Improved infrastructure and coordination:** New offices and stronger collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs And Campus Diversity, ASIR, and IT have improved data use and student support.
- **Ongoing financial strain:** Persistent budget cuts, reduced international enrollment, and loss of federal support have increased pressure on the university and intensified the workload carried by faculty and staff.
- **Creative funding approaches:** SDSU is pursuing partnerships (e.g., with community colleges), shared services, and research initiatives like the Division of Research and Innovation (DRI) to expand capacity and offset funding losses.
- **Limits of autonomy:** Some challenges—such as salary increases, deferred maintenance, and systemic funding shortfalls—are beyond SDSU's control and require system-level and state-level solutions to support sustainability.

- **Sustaining research and doctoral goals:** Research and doctoral programs remain vital to SDSU's mission, though they strain the budget; the state must provide appropriate funding to match these ambitions.
- **Commitment to core mission:** SDSU remains steadfast in expanding access, ensuring student success, advancing research, and engaging the community made possible through the tireless work of faculty and staff.
- **Future strategy:** The university will continue to seek new revenue sources, streamline operations, and lobby more assertively for fair state support, recognizing that sustaining faculty and staff excellence is essential to SDSU's long-term success.