EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
RESULTS OF THE STUDENT REPORT
Campus Climate at San José State University (SJSU): Student Perceptions

INTRODUCTION
The Campus Climate Committee (CCC), a presidential advisory group composed of faculty, students, administrators, and staff, in partnership with the Office of Institutional Research, conducted a survey in spring 2006 to assess perceptions of the campus climate at SJSU. Campus climate was defined as “the formal environment in which we learn, teach, and work, and live in a postsecondary setting.” This Executive Summary highlights the most salient findings of the study.

DATA COLLECTION
Data collection began April 18, 2006 and ended June 10, 2006. Approximately 3,000 student surveys were administered online (about 10% of the student population). A total of 356 students responded to the questionnaire, a final response rate of about 12 percent. The sample somewhat over-represents female and Asian/Asian American students, and under-represents male, White, and Latino/a students.

All samples are subject to sampling error. For a random sample of 356 respondents, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ±5.2 percentage points. Given the sampling deviations described in the previous paragraph, the actual error is likely to be somewhat higher.

FINDINGS

Perceptions of the Campus Climate
• Most students (67%) have “somewhat” to “very” favorable perceptions of the campus climate at SJSU, yet several groups of students (e.g., women, gay/lesbian/bisexual, ethnic minority, disabled, Latino) view the campus climate less favorably (e.g., more sexist, more homophobic, less supportive, less welcoming).

• The large majority of students (81%) do not personally experience discrimination at SJSU. At the same time, findings show that 22% of the students with a disability reported having been discriminated against “occasionally” or “frequently” because of their disability, followed by 16% of the Latino students because of their race/ethnicity, 8% of the homosexual or bisexual students because of their sexual orientation.

• Overall, 54% of students reported that they have learned “somewhat” to “a great deal” about racism, discrimination based on disability, sexism, and homophobia in their classes at SJSU. However, such learning varied widely among different majors; Applied Arts and Sciences, Education, and Social Sciences majors indicated more learning on these topics than Business, Engineering, and Science majors.

Campus Diversity
• Surprisingly, only about 40% of students indicated that they know how to officially report racist, sexist, or other discriminatory behaviors. Although many students do not fear for their physical

1 The survey asked eight questions about different aspects of campus social relations. The figure (67%) represents a weighted average of the positive responses across the eight questions. Similar averages (in italics) are reported elsewhere in this Executive Summary.
safety on campus and do not feel uncomfortable disclosing their sexual orientation, discussing racially sensitive topics, or talking about their political views on campus, several groups of students (e.g., women, gay/lesbian/bisexual, African American) feel uncomfortable about one of the topics mentioned above.

- Most students (79%) value the work that SJSU is doing to promote diversity, yet a majority of students (80%) believe that more consideration should be given to the needs and interests of disabled people on campus.

The Learning Environment

- More than two-thirds of students felt that there are role models for them on campus.
- The majority of students (84%) agreed that SJSU staff is sensitive about ethnic/racial, sexist, and homophobic issues, but several groups of students (e.g., ethnic minority, those whose primary language is not English, some majors) report that SJSU staff is less sensitive to the above issues.

Will the Survey Have an Impact?

- A majority (70%) of students “somewhat” to “strongly” believe their responses on the survey will have a significant impact on SJSU’s campus climate.

Open Ended Responses to the Campus Climate Student Survey

The most prevalent themes in the student qualitative responses include:

- Experiences of dissatisfying service with several key gateway officers on campus (e.g., Admissions, Advising, Enrollment, Testing, EOP, and Financial Aid)
- Feelings of alienation and marginalization among White Students due to the predominant focus on minority students issues on campus.
- Negative experiences in specific departmental majors with faculty
- Need for better physical layout and services for disabled students
- Need for more campus safety measures (especially at night)
- No tolerance or acceptance for conservative views of students
- SJSU focuses too much on diversity, which is divisive and creates feelings of separation between groups
- Need for more community on campus; the commuter feel/image is negative
- Need for information about how to report discrimination

SUMMARY

Survey results reveal: (1) there are many aspects of SJSU that students value; (2) there are some aspects of the campus climate that need to be reexamined and improved upon, and (3) more research is needed (both quantitative and qualitative studies over time) to fully understand the campus climate. Current results suggest that students see efforts to value and promote diversity as important to SJSU. Furthermore, most SJSU students feel safe, welcomed, respected and supported on campus. At the same time, findings indicate that we need to devise strategies to ensure that all students feel valued. Certain subgroups, such as gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, students with disabilities, and Latino students seem to feel significantly less welcomed, respected, and supported as compared to their peers.

Several goals and recommendations for each goal are proposed by the Campus Climate Survey Committee.

Goal #1: Continue the process of on-going assessment and critical evaluation of SJSU’s campus climate.

Goal #2: Create a welcoming and safe environment for all students.
Goal #3: Build student morale and enhance the sense of campus community.

Goal #4: Continue to support diversity and build on diversity to enhance learning experiences for all students.