



THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

BAKERSFIELD

May 2009

CHANNEL ISLANDS

Open Letter to the Sonoma State University Community:

CHICO

During the spring 2009 term, the three-year review of Ruben Armiñana, President of Sonoma State University (SSU), was initiated. The review took the form of collecting and summarizing letters from a selection of the campus and external community members. The review concluded on May 12, 2009, with a discussion of the review by the CSU Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees and I appreciate the contributions of those who worked with us on this review.

DOMINGUEZ HILLS

EAST BAY

FRESNO

Criteria established by the Board of Trustees in 1984, and updated in 1994 and 2001, were used to assess the performance of President Armiñana and the progress of the institution. These measures included the overall management of the institution, relations on campus and within the system, educational leadership, community relations, major achievements of the campus and the president, and personal characteristics of the president. Faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community representatives were invited to submit written comments responding to the trustees' criteria.

FULLERTON

HUMBOLDT

LONG BEACH

Among the notable selected accomplishments are the following:

LOS ANGELES

- Increasing the openness concerning fiscal spending and budget allocations.
- Creating the Green Music Center and opening the Music Education Hall to faculty and students.
- Investing in faculty professional development by committing \$200,000 per year over five years and eventually totaling \$1 Million.

MARITIME ACADEMY

MONTEREY BAY

NORTHRIDGE

- Renovating the information technology infrastructure.

POMONA

SACRAMENTO

- Transforming the campus physically by constructing the Schulz Information Center, renovating Darwin Hall and Salazar Hall, and doubling student housing to become a residential campus.

SAN BERNARDINO

- Obtaining a grant from the Keck Foundation to fund the microanalysis laboratory in the School of Science and Technology.

SAN DIEGO

SAN FRANCISCO

- Contracting with Barnes & Noble to operate the bookstore.

SAN JOSÉ

- Completing implementation of the Common Management System (CMS).

SAN LUIS OBISPO

- Conducting campus training and drills for emergencies and disasters.

SAN MARCOS

- Hiring 20+ tenure track faculty annually.

SONOMA

- Securing property in anticipation of construction of faculty and staff housing.

STANISLAUS

- Renewing the commitment to diversity by expanding the role and membership of the new President's Diversity Council.

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CHICO

DOMINGUEZ HILLS

- Being the host site of the Science and Technology High School and having a close relationship with the Roseland University Preparatory Charter High School.

EAST BAY

President Armiñana appointed an effective senior management team and entrusts them to carry out their responsibilities. He meets with the Academic Senate chair; with the chair, vice chair and past chair of the Senate; with the AS president; with Presidential Scholars; and with groups of randomly selected faculty members.

FRESNO

FULLERTON

HUMBOLDT

Dr. Armiñana is accessible and responds to emails quickly. He is available to the media. President Armiñana encourages and supports diversity among students and among SSU employees.

LONG BEACH

President Armiñana takes a strong interest in the Roseland University Preparatory High School in Santa Rosa. He maintains contact with Roseland Prep graduates who enroll at Sonoma State by monitoring their progress and encouraging them to overcome their challenges.

LOS ANGELES

MARITIME ACADEMY

In addition to creating a fund for faculty professional development, Dr. Armiñana put an additional \$1.6 million into Academic Affairs to sustain the class schedule.

MONTEREY BAY

NORTHRIDGE

Academic offerings at the university are viewed as more serious than in the past by the community and the university has a much more positive image. Fundraising at SSU is strong and surpasses equivalent sized CSU campuses.

POMONA

SACRAMENTO

The Donald and Maureen Green Music Center, being constructed through a partnership of Sonoma State and donors, will consist of a 1,200-seat concert hall, a 250-seat recital hall, an executive retreat center, a music education hall with office space for the Music Department, and student practice studios. It is expected to be one of the finest concert venues in the world. Escalating construction costs combined with a downturn in donor funding caused by the recession have been problematic in completing the project. The music education hall is complete and occupied, but other parts of the complex still require interior equipment.

SAN BERNARDINO

SAN DIEGO

SAN FRANCISCO

SAN JOSÉ

The Green Music Center project has been controversial, as are most new construction projects at SSU. Some faculty members maintain it is not needed, it is too grand in size, or it distracts donors from donating to the educational departments of SSU.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

SAN MARCOS

The decreasing state revenue to support the campuses of the California State University, the contentious negotiation of a labor agreement with the California Faculty Association, and the Green Music Center project combined in spring 2007 to cause unrest among the faculty leading to a no-confidence vote. As a result, President Armiñana has been more frequent in his communications.

SONOMA

STANISLAUS

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CHICO

There was also some unhappiness about SSU contracting the bookstore operation to Barnes & Noble. However, several reviewers remarked that it was unfair to blame the president when a committee of administrators, faculty, and students recommended the relationship with Barnes and Noble. The communications appeared to breakdown when those on the committee did not inform the Academic Senate of its recommendation.

DOMINGUEZ HILLS

EAST BAY

FRESNO

President Ruben Armiñana and I have discussed the review and identified the following goals for the next few years:

FULLERTON

- Continue the emphasis on student success and support and implement the Graduation Rate Initiative of the Board of Trustees, including monitoring the policies and practices at Sonoma State that will improve retention and graduation rates.

HUMBOLDT

- Continue the outstanding community relations efforts.

LONG BEACH

- Diversify sources of funds used to support the university.

LOS ANGELES

- Continue efforts to build consensus over institutional goals and directions.

MARITIME ACADEMY

- Complete the Green Music Center.

MONTEREY BAY

- Continue efforts to attain diversity among students and step-up diversity among the faculty to reflect the demographics of California.

NORTHRIDGE

POMONA

SACRAMENTO

In conclusion, Dr. Ruben Armiñana has been an effective and imaginative president of Sonoma State University, transforming it academically and physically into a respected educational institution and a modern physical plant. He thinks "outside the box" to achieve his goal of student retention, satisfaction and graduation. Members of the Board of Trustees and I are extremely pleased to have Dr. Armiñana as part of the California State University leadership team.

SAN BERNARDINO

SAN DIEGO

SAN FRANCISCO

With kind regards,

SAN JOSÉ

Sincerely,

SAN LUIS OBISPO

SAN MARCOS

Charles B. Reed
Chancellor

SONOMA

STANISLAUS

CBR/wd