

S.R. 5 (2025)

Supporting Institutional Change Against Ableism at Santa Clara University

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ADDRESSED TO:

The Entire Santa Clara University Community, including but not limited to:

Julie Sullivan, University President and Chair of the Planning Action Council
Molly McDonald, Chief of Staff, Office of the President
James Glaser, University Executive Vice President and Provost
Kelly Capen Douglas, General Counsel
Jeanne Rosenberger, Vice Provost for Student Life
T. Shá Duncan Smith, Vice President for Inclusive Excellence
Zenobia Lane, Vice President for Human Resources
Wilson Garone, Vice President for Finance & Administration and Chair of the University Budget Council
Daniel Press, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences
Sabrina Zirkel, Dean of the School of Education and Counseling Psychology
Elaine Scott, Dean of the School of Engineering
Michael Kaufman, Dean of the School of Law
Ed Grier, Dean of the Leavey School of Business
Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, Dean of the Jesuit School of Theology
Carolynn Roncaglia, Chair of the University Coordinating Committee
Scot Hanna-Weir, Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee

Michael Calegari, Chair of the Faculty Affairs Committee
Matthew Duncan, Dean of Students
Sean Collins, Assistant Vice President for University Operations
Lisa Swendsen, Assistant Vice President for the Event Planning Office
Samuel Florio, Associate Vice President for Auxiliary Services
Amy Lueck, Associate Provost for Faculty Development
Heather Dumas-Dyer, Director of Student Health, Counseling, Well-Being
Brandi Williams, Interim Director of Equal Opportunity and Title IX
Ray Plaza, Director of the Office for Diversity and Inclusion and President of the Staff Senate
Chris Harris, Director of the Office of Multicultural Learning
Tedd Vanadilok, Director of the Center for Student Involvement
Lafayette Baker, Director of On-Campus Living
Dave Machado, Senior Director of Facilities Operations
Hailey Watson, Director of Operations for Benson Dining Services
Nancy Cutler, Deputy Chief Information Officer for Academic Technology
Philip J. Beltran, Director of Campus Safety
Horacio Enriquez, Executive Director of the Office of Financial Aid
Stephen Toppin, Interim Bursar
Teresa McCollough, President of the Faculty Senate
Tim Urdan, President-Elect of the Faculty Senate
Carmina Mendoza, President-Elect of the Staff Senate



The Associated Student Government of Santa Clara University's Official Resolution Supporting Institutional Change Against Ableism at Santa Clara University
January 16th, 2025

The Student Senate,

RECOGNIZES the pertinent and immediate need to address ableism at Santa Clara University as addressed by this Senate in October 2024, and reiterates the responsibility of the SCU administration to foster a campus environment that facilitates and protects the development of *cura personalis* for **all** persons. This necessitates addressing the persistent efforts to dehumanize disabled members of the community **simply because of who they are**. We must end the ableist culture of SCU that negatively impacts disabled students, faculty, staff, and visitors in the ongoing context of intersectional oppression,

FURTHER RECOGNIZES the legal obligations that SCU and its administration must meet to follow the Americans With Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that all students with disabilities receive their approved accommodations for all programs offered by the institution—including extracurriculars—and have access to acquire accommodations beyond basic compliance. In order to meet these needs successfully and consistently, we urge the University to focus on four major barriers that disabled SCU community members encounter daily: “(a) faculty perception, (b) fit of advisors, (c) college stressors, and (d) quality of support services”;

ACKNOWLEDGES the disabled students, departments, and organizations who have voiced their concerns and worked to resolve the campus-wide culture of ableism; we, the SCU community, must work together to institutionally destigmatize being disabled and understand that it requires a culture shift through changes in language, accessibility practices, and education. **We highlight the incredible work that many departments and members of the community have accomplished in these efforts**, including but not limited to the Office of Accessible Education, the Division of Inclusive Excellence, the Office of Multicultural Learning, the Wellness Center, and the Learning Commons;

URGES the University, **across all Schools, Departments, Divisions, Offices, Centers, Councils, and Committees, to read this entire Resolution** and address the discriminatory culture that disabled individuals and communities experience, perpetuated by the mockery, victimization, and ignorance that stems from students, faculty, and staff. All members of the SCU community, whether disabled or able-bodied, play a pivotal role in the workings of our institution. Those who are able-bodied cannot recognize in the same capacity the daily nuanced encounters that disabled members of the SCU community face. We must work together to bridge this gap;

FURTHER URGES the University, *including Campus Facilities, the Finance Department, and Auxiliary Services*, to make all of the necessary changes to ensure that all University facilities are physically

accessible for **all disabled persons**, with these immediate areas to address including but not limited to:

- I. The consistent lack of essential accessibility features, including
 - A. Broken or absent automatic door openers (e.g., SCDI entrances and rooms, Benson basement offices, Nobili dining hall, Library study spaces, etc.)
 - B. Perpetually malfunctioning elevators (Sobrato, Casa, SCDI)
 - C. Spaces without elevators, ramp access, or accessible desks (e.g., Daly Science, the Campus Bookstore, staff-only ramps and elevators)
- II. While we recognize that some of these buildings are not mandated by law to be accessible due to the time periods they were built in, this is not an excuse to be complacent, nor is this the case for most buildings. We appreciate the efforts being done to ratify the changes in some of these buildings, including Nobili Hall.

Not adding the accessibility accommodations listed above, among many others, significantly negatively impacts members of the SCU community with disabilities, especially those who attend the University to receive an education— students. Disabled students pay a high tuition to attend this University, just the same as able-bodied students; yet, **their experiences here do not reflect an equitable or welcoming environment**. Without physical accessibility, disabled students and members are disadvantaged, requiring them to circumvent even the most basic elements of attendance rather than letting the burden rightfully lie on the University;

FURTHER URGES the University, *including the General Counsel, the Office of the Provost and EVP, the Division of Inclusive Excellence, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX, Human Resources, the Office for Multicultural Learning, and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion*, to ensure that the student, faculty, and staff communities understand that service dogs have life-saving jobs, are medically necessary, and should not be interrupted. It is imperative that disabled service dog handlers are not discriminated against in accessing spaces by understanding the following legal obligations and some of the current issues handlers face:

- I. Current inappropriate and discriminatory behaviors affecting service dog handlers include:
 - A. Preventing disabled persons from entering the Cowell Center and the Maker lab because they have a service dog, despite the service dogs being fully trained and geared as necessary to enter specialized spaces appropriately;
 - B. Pet dogs, including emotional support animals, being allowed into buildings that they legally do not have a right to enter, resulting in them attacking, causing harm to, disrupting, or preventing a service animal's ability to do their tasks required for the safety and wellbeing of their handler;
 - C. Having dogs on campus off-leash, which allows them to approach service dogs, leading to a risk of being attacked and, regardless of whether they are "friendly," interrupting their ability to engage in their required jobs. Per [Santa Clara County Section 6.30.010](#), pet dogs must remain on leash at all times unless in a designated off-leash area; therefore, the University is failing to uphold county regulations;
 - D. SCU community members approaching, touching, talking, photographing, calling by name, making eye contact, or attempting to distract service animals in any way from their jobs, all without their handler's permission;
- II. Legal obligations regarding service dogs:
 - A. [Access](#) rights: service dogs must be allowed to accompany their handlers in all areas open

- to the public or students unless there is a specific, *legitimate* safety risk;
- B. **Permissible** inquiries — staff and faculty may only ask:
 1. Is the dog required because of a disability?
 2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?
 3. **However**, disabled student service dog handlers have OAE-approved accommodations that supersede the need to ask these questions;
- C. Faculty and staff **cannot** request documentation, require the dog to demonstrate its tasks, or ask about the handler's disability;
- D. Reasonable **accommodations** for disabled students, including allowing service animals in classrooms, **residence halls**, and campus facilities;
- E. Service animals must be included in emergency planning, such as evacuation procedures;
- III. Under federal and **state law**, a service dog is defined as a dog trained to perform specific tasks directly related to the disability of the person they assist:
 - A. **California law** does not grant emotional support animals the same access rights as service dogs in public accommodations but does provide protections in housing;

For some, these obligations are already well known, and we commend those of you for your self-initiative in education and openness to understanding;

FURTHER URGES the University, *including the Office of the Provost and EVP, the Division of Inclusive Excellence, Campus Facilities, the Finance Department, and Auxiliary Services*, to ensure that classrooms, a part of wider facilities but more specifically the center of student learning, are accessible to all students by addressing the following issues, including but not limited to:

- I. Chalkboards are highly problematic for both disabled students with sensory disorders and those with respiratory issues that can flare due to the chalk dust;
- II. Allowing food in classrooms that can be both the cause of triggering an allergic reaction and impede the academic focus and success of students with sensory issues and misophonia;
- III. The “ADA table” in classrooms in Kenna, O’Connor, Vari, and Alameda Hall;
 - A. These tables are NOT present in classrooms, notably in Daly and Lucas;
 - B. These tables are treated more as storage spaces for lost items, rather than their actual purpose. By using these tables as storage for junk, it;
 1. Sends a symbolic message about how the University sees those with disabilities;
 2. Prevents these tables from being used for their intended functionality. Many students, including disabled students, are unaware of their true purpose, so they are not used when needed;
 - C. Often, using these tables is met with stigma from other students and faculty;

FURTHER URGES the SCU administration, *including the Office of the President, the General Counsel, the Office of the Provost and EVP, the Offices of the Academic Deans, the Division of Inclusive Excellence, Human Resources, the Faculty Senate, the Faculty Development Office, the Global Engagement Office, the Academic Technology Office, the Faculty Affairs Committee, the Academic Affairs Committee, and the Student Affairs Committee*, to ensure that **all** of its faculty work to prevent discriminatory and illegal behaviors against students throughout the academic experience, understanding that active *and* passive behaviors can be ableist, including but not limited to:

- I. Legal obligations for faculty:

- A. Must adhere to laws such as Title IX (prohibiting sex-based discrimination), Title VI (prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, or national origin), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
 - 1. Treat all students and colleagues equally, regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected statuses;
 - 2. **Must accommodate** students with disabilities: includes ensuring accessibility of course materials and providing reasonable modifications or auxiliary aids, such as extended testing time or note-taking support;
 - 3. Must avoid behavior that could be considered harassment in compliance with University policies as well as state and federal laws;
 - 4. **Must** report suspected cases of discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, or abuse to designated campus authorities to the Title IX office [here](#);
 - B. Are obligated to apply consistent and transparent grading standards, free from bias;
 - C. **Must** protect the privacy of student education records and avoid disclosing personal information without the student's consent: grades, performance feedback, or other identifiable information, including a disability;
 - D. **Must** report any campus crimes or safety concerns, depending on their designation as a Campus Security Authority;
 - 1. Faculty can use [this webpage](#) to (a) determine if they are a Campus Security Authority and (b) if they are, make any necessary reports;
- II. Specific faculty-related grievances disabled students face, including but not limited to:
- A. Refusing to provide accommodations or questioning the need for required accommodations;
 - B. Sharing information about a student's accommodations with the class or directly encouraging disabled students not to use their accommodations;
 - C. Telling disabled students that they are not disabled or do not need their accommodations (beyond encouraging them not to be used);
 - D. Requiring students to sit in specific spots to "keep them accountable" for the usage of their accommodations;
 - E. Expecting disabled students to initiate discussions with professors about accommodations even after the OAE has already approved them;
 - F. Questioning a student's competency or potential to succeed because of their disability;
 - G. Claiming that since a student is doing well in a class, they do not need accommodations;
 - H. Asking invasive questions or requiring unnecessary personal information to "validate" accommodations and needs;
 - I. Accusing disabled students of using accommodations as an excuse or to take advantage of our academic institution;
 - J. Not ensuring confidentiality during accommodation meetings;
 - K. Distributing materials that portray disabilities in a negative or offensive light;
 - L. Requesting doctor's notes with unnecessary specifics to excuse a student from class or lab, even when accommodations related to absences are already in place;
 - M. Penalizing disabled students who are chronically ill or who cannot attend class due to illness, including issues related to long-term illness, hospitalizations, or flare-ups;
 - N. Not providing subtitles, audio descriptions, or other necessary accommodations when showing videos, or playing media at excessive volumes;
 - O. Making jokes or comments about a student's disability, such as startling a student with

- anxiety or PTSD or calling students with mobility aids “lazy”;
- P. Refusing to collaborate with the OAE, including refusal to sign accommodation letters, submit alternative testing forms, or send student exams;
- Q. Not having a system in place for students with testing accommodations, making the student responsible for facilitating accommodations;
- R. Formatting exams in a way that makes accommodations, such as font enlargement or accessible testing, impossible to implement;
- S. Implementing pop quizzes and oral exams in such a way that accommodations cannot be provided adequately in-class (i.e., at the start of class) and making it near-impossible to schedule accommodations with the OAE, given its “five days in advance” requirement;

The grievances listed above are just a mere fraction of the highly problematic issues that disabled students face on a **daily basis** due to faculty and staff not meeting their legal obligations. We recognize that many faculty and staff members are not ableist, but are rather allies in standing with the disability community, and these SCU community members are valued and needed. However, some faculty and staff are passively ableist, unaware of the consequences their actions have on disabled students because of their lack of education and perception. For these members and all members of the SCU community, **the main way to mitigate these trespasses is through continual, intersectional education of disabilities and how it can impact students**. Currently, there is no training required for faculty and staff members regarding adapting their classroom to fit the needs of disabled students; this clear omission is one instance through which SCU administration fails to aid the education of their employees, ultimately leading to passive ableism. However, some faculty and staff members are knowingly ableist—their actions come not from a place of ignorance but out of direct hate. The SCU administration continually fails the members of our community by allowing this hate to foster and *refusing* to release statements that outline that hate towards any marginalized community is unacceptable;

FURTHER URGES the University, *including the Office of Student Life, the Staff Senate, the Center for Student Involvement, Campus Safety Services, the Event Planning Office, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX, Human Resources, the Academic Technology Office, On-Campus Living, the Cowell Center, Benson Dining Services, the Benson Dining Committee, the Staff Affairs Committee, and the Student Affairs Committee*, to address and resolve grievances across different departments and center experiences focused on student life, including but not limited to:

- I. Office of Student Life:
 - A. Disabled students, particularly those with mental health conditions, are disproportionately targeted and labeled as “students of concern” despite established support plans and accommodations, isolating these students and placing extraordinary burdens on them;
 - B. Housing accommodations:
 - 1. Housing staff often fail to provide accessible, timely housing for disabled students despite approved documentation from the OAE, forcing students into prolonged battles to secure appropriate arrangements;
 - 2. In-person housing meetings required for accommodations are scheduled at inaccessible times, such as during finals week, and fail to guarantee legally satisfactory outcomes;
 - 3. Instances of Housing staff who display dismissive and rude behavior toward disabled students seeking support;

4. Housing staff fail to activate credentials or assist disabled students during move-in and move-out, forcing students to pay for external support and spend extra time reaching out for assistance;
- C. The Cowell Center:
1. Lacks critical resources for disabled students, such as proper sharps disposal for self-administered medication (also lacking in Housing);
 2. Staff publicly discuss sensitive disability-related information in waiting areas, compromising student privacy;
- II. Mailroom & Medication:
- A. The mailroom fails to properly store refrigerated medications, risking the efficacy of essential—and expensive—treatments despite clear labeling;
- III. Benson Dining Services:
- A. Food safety, cross-contact, and barriers to information:
 1. Despite assurances, Benson’s food, including Simply Oasis, is unsafe for students with allergies or autoimmune conditions due to rampant cross-contact issues and mislabeled items;
 2. Dining staff lack training and display carelessness, with incidents of displays labeled “free of” specific allergens specifically containing said allergens;
 3. Instances of chefs mocking or dismissing students who ask about allergens;
 - B. Transparency and accountability:
 1. Dining staff are not equipped to answer ingredient-related questions, forcing students to wait for the dining manager, wasting precious meal time;
 2. Cross-contact is not treated as a serious issue, creating **life-threatening** situations for students with severe allergies or conditions;
- IV. Office for Accessible Education (OAE):
- A. Facility and staffing issues:
 1. The OAE’s permanent location in Benson’s basement—separate from the temporary housing in Daly, ironically because the OAE was moved to accommodate the renovations for a CSO—is noisy and unsuitable for testing accommodations;
 2. The OAE is incredibly understaffed, and scheduling accommodations appointments often takes weeks;
 3. The OAE lacks the authority to enact timely solutions for the urgent accessibility needs of students; often, members of the SCU community do not recognize or respect their already-limited authority;
 - B. Privacy concerns:
 1. Student workers report that emails sent to the OAE by students are accessible to them without the disabled students’ knowledge, compromising confidentiality;
- V. Accessibility for events:
- A. Events, conferences, and retreats organized or advertised by the University are not designed to be accessible by default, requiring disabled students to request accommodations proactively (ADA requests);
 - B. There should be a protocol designed by appropriate departments, including the Division of Inclusive Excellence, to ensure accommodation on a wider scale for disabled students as the standard;

FURTHER URGES the University, *including the Office of Student Life, Finance Department, the Division of Inclusive Excellence, the Office of Financial Aid, the Bursar's Office, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX, Human Resources, Auxiliary Services, the Office of University Operations, On-Campus Living, and the Cowell Center*, to relieve disabled students of the undue financial burdens that they face across campus due to their disabilities, including but not limited to:

- I. Parking permits:
 - A. Disabled students often require parking permits due to mobility challenges or living off-campus because of insufficient on-campus support. The high cost of these permits effectively penalizes disabled students for needing accommodations;
 - B. The current discounted permit system lacks transparency, is poorly advertised, and requires invasive submission of confidential medical records, even for students already registered with the OAE or those with a disabled placard;
 1. The system excludes disabled students who need vehicles as accommodations but do not qualify for an ADA placard;
 - C. Disabled students are disproportionately targeted with parking tickets, even when displaying proper permits;
- II. Therapy off-site:
 - A. Stressors and burdens unique to SCU—as outlined above—push disabled students to look for off-campus therapy, incurring additional financial costs;
- III. Meal plans:
 - A. Meal options at SCU fail to accommodate the medical dietary needs of disabled students, forcing them to pay for a meal plan and external food sources to meet physical needs;
 - B. Students with allergies often resort to using dining points at the Cellar, where prices are significantly inflated, sometimes by 250-300%, despite claims by Auxiliary Services that prices align with nearby stores;
- IV. Transportation:
 - A. To accommodate for a lack of food options that meet dietary needs, students must go off campus, requiring not only financial resources but also substantial time investments;
 - B. The University has yet to implement a point-to-point ride service system, despite previous trials, leaving disabled students to navigate costly alternatives alone;
 - C. Students traveling to medical appointments or off-campus therapy must arrange and pay for their own transportation;
 - D. Arrupe placements for the ELSJ core requirement:
 1. The depreciation of the Lyft token forces students to pay transportation costs for mandatory positions and are not deemed educational expenses by financial aid;
 2. This reliance on rideshare services presents safety risks, with reports of sexual assaults during rides, as well as mobility accessibility issues. Students with service animals are frequently denied rides despite legal protections;
- V. Moving into residence halls:
 - A. The lack of on-campus assistance for moving in or out of housing forces disabled students to pay hundreds of dollars for external services like Bronco Storage;

While these specific financial struggles at SCU are mostly unique to disabled students, financial struggles are not. Students are often marginalized based on socioeconomic needs, with intersectionality as a part of other marginalized communities on our campus. Holistically addressing these financial burdens requires

the University to recognize and support the **diverse and overlapping needs of its students** to foster a truly inclusive and equitable environment;

BE IT RESOLVED that the University will substantively address the listed points in this issue, create committees focused on reflecting on the ableist gaps in the SCU experience, and further work to create an environment that supports the education of **all** students.

So signed by the following individuals, representative of the collective approval of the Associated Student Government of Santa Clara University,



Tay Grett
Senator At-Large for Health and Wellness
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