Dear colleagues,

The Graduation Initiative is a system-wide effort to help students achieve their goals to graduate in a timely manner. Our goals at Cal Poly are to encourage good planning to that end, and to ensure excellence in the educational experience while removing barriers that may impede student progress. While students are ultimately responsible for their success, we understand the importance of having access to outstanding advising, excellent instruction, and a solid system to support their overall health and wellbeing.

Over the years, Academic Affairs has identified policies and practices which can hamper student progress or which are simply inefficient or ineffective. We have invested time and effort to address these issues. Examples include the APDQ and Change of Major policies, and the Priority Registration process. While we continue to assess the outcomes from the changes we have recently implemented, all evidence thus far points to successful results.

We have also created tools to support student planning and decision-making, which in turn provide information to support advising and decision-making in academic programs. These include creating Degree Flowcharts for every major at Cal Poly (http://flowcharts.calpoly.edu/mymap.php), and a Degree Progress Report--which is a real-time accounting of a student’s progress through the major (http://www.registrar.calpoly.edu/content/degree_progress/degree_progress). Most recently, we implemented PolyPlanner to aid students in creating their course schedules and to inform departments of pending course and seat requirements for staffing and scheduling purposes (http://www.registrar.calpoly.edu/PolyPlanner). These tools are available to every student and academic department, and thus have positively impacted our retention and graduation rates, overall.

There are many, many additional initiatives already underway or under development at the university-wide level and across the spectrum of colleges, departments, various units including Student Affairs, and student cohorts. A small sample includes:

- Raising scholarship dollars to support students with financial need, and implementing a software system to help us more readily match students to available scholarships so that those dollars aren’t wasted.
- Pilot studies underway to determine how to improve success in placing students in the correct math class.
- Developing new initiatives to help us more quickly identify students who might need additional, timely support to get them through a rough spot and keep them in school.
Two very important, university-wide projects just getting started are reimagining our *General Education* program, and reconsidering how to better meet students’ needs with respect to the *Graduate Writing Requirement*. This is incredibly important work which has enormous implications for student success.

Each of these initiatives requires thoughtful, engaged staff and faculty members with vision and the wherewithal to get things done. As we engage the campus community in the work to address the long-term vision for the Graduation Initiative and look for continuous improvement in all that we do, I want to thank everyone who has had a role in our successes thus far, as well as those who are knee-deep in data and debate right now as we consider our next moves. I know that, in the end, it’s all about people, and I’m very thankful and proud to recognize the outstanding community of leaders we have in all areas of campus. Thank you for your time, expertise, energy, and passion!