The mission of San Francisco State University is to create and maintain an environment for learning that promotes respect for and appreciation of scholarship, freedom, human diversity, and the cultural mosaic of the City of San Francisco and the Bay Area; to promote excellence in instruction and intellectual accomplishment; and to provide broadly accessible higher education for residents of the region and state, as well as the nation and world. To fulfill its mission, the university is committed to the following goals:

- Attracting, retaining, and graduating a highly diverse student body;
- Providing disciplinary and interdisciplinary liberal arts and professional education that is academically rigorous and intellectually challenging;
- Providing curricula that reflect all dimensions of human diversity, and that encourage critical thinking and social and cultural awareness;
- Recruiting, retaining, and supporting a diverse faculty whose teaching demonstrates an active engagement with their individual fields of study and whose creative and scholarly work is an extension of the classroom, laboratory, or studio;
- Employing a staff and administration reflecting the diversity of the community and the values of the campus;
- Fostering a collegial and cooperative intellectual environment that includes recognition and appreciation of differing viewpoints and promotes academic freedom within the university community; and
- Serving the communities with which its students and faculty are engaged.