

Finding Your Circle

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Ann Hawthorne 00:00

Welcome Tritons, to Triton Tools and Tidbits. I'm your host Ann Hawthorne and this week our episode is about engagement and finding community at UC San Diego. We're excited to have you here to experience our podcast. Let's dive in.

Ann Hawthorne 00:16

Today's episode will focus on engagement and finding community at UC San Diego. Specifically, we'll be talking about opportunities to get involved and the over 600 student organizations across campus. We're going to hear directly from five UC San Diego students about how and why they got involved, what they've gained from their engagement, and tips for connecting with student organizations in a virtual environment. So, let's now meet the stars of the show. As I mentioned, we have five amazing UCSD students on the podcast today who have kindly offered to share their student organization involvement stories. Each has a unique campus experience. And I am so excited for them to tell us a little bit about their background, their journey, and advice for getting involved. So welcome, everyone. I was hoping that you could each share your name, your pronouns, your hometown, college, where you're currently living and what student organizations you're a part of.

Danny Lu 01:24

Hi, my name is Danny. I'm a fourth year studying biochem: cell bio. I'm living off-campus and I'm a Marshall student. My pronouns are he/him/his and I am originally from the six to six area, LA. And yeah, I am the current chair for the Marshall org, Active Community of Thurgood Marshall. And I am also the president for the campus-wide org, Saatchi Collegiate Association. And I'm happy to be here.

Harper Estus 01:53

Hi, everyone. My name is Harper Estus, my pronouns are she/her/hers. I'm a cognitive behavioral neuroscience major, and I'm also minoring in education studies. My hometown is San Diego. I'm actually a commuter student. So, I've been commuting. Well, now I'm just an off-campus student, but I was commuting previously, from my home since my first year, I'm in Muir College, and I'm involved in a

campus-wide organization named We Care, it's new this year. And then I'm also involved in Muir through M3C. It's also known as Muir College Commuter Council. And then I'm also an Associated Student as an off-campus senator, and I'm also really happy to be here, too.

Alison Wang 02:34

Hi, everyone. My name is Ali. My pronouns are she/her/hers, and I'm a third year at Revelle College. I'm majoring in neurobiology and minoring in psychology. Currently, I'm actually at home. I'm an international student from Canada. So, I'm right now in Vancouver, just hanging out at home. I am involved at UCSD in sorority-fraternity life. I'm in a sorority for Panhellenic and I'm currently a junior on the Junior Panhellenic Council. I'm also an intern for UCSD Outreach Coordinators, and we program events and market them towards international and out-of-state students.

Luiza Tanoue Troncoso Pe 03:16

Hi, everyone. My name is Louisa. I am a third-year international student from Brazil. I'm currently living in Brazil right now. My pronouns are she/her/hers and I'm from Muir College. My majors are economics and cognitive behavioral neuroscience. So, I'm actually double majoring and the current student orgs that I'm involved in is that I'm the secretary for the Brazilian Student Association, I am part of one of a Panhellenic sorority, and I work as a student office coordinator at the Chancellor's Associate Scholars Program.

Miranda Demarrais-Spero 03:48

Hey everybody, I'm Miranda Demarrais-Spero, my pronouns are she/her/hers. I'm a fourth-year so it's my last year and I'm also a transfer student. I'm majoring in communication, and I'm in Sixth College. By now I'm living off campus as a commuter student, and my student involvement—I'm the Sixth College Student Council Vice President Internal. And I'm the President of Sixth Transfer Organization and Commuter Society, as well as I work as a Center for Student Involvement as a Communication of Leadership assistant.

Ann Hawthorne 04:17

Wonderful, thank you everyone for sharing. I would love to know why you all decided to join a student organization.

Luiza Tanoue Troncoso Pe 04:27

Well, for me, it was kind of when I moved to the US—I—it's kind of scary. I mean, being in a new country when you're so young and really not knowing that many people. So, I really just - I was looking for a smaller community of friends and people who had similar interests to me so that was the main reason and I definitely found that and I would highly recommend it.

Miranda Demarrais-Spero 04:47

I can totally agree with Lisa as a transfer student. It can be really scary coming into a new community. I heard a lot of rumors about social life at UCSD, and I was really nervous that I wasn't going to find a community. So, at orientation and I learned a lot about Sixth College Student Council and a bunch of other orgs. And I really wanted to find a community. And once I found that I was immediately accepted and really leadership just spoke to me, it was something that was super interesting.

Alison Wang 05:15

For me, it was a kind of similar experience to Luiza because I'm also an international student. So, moving so far away from home, I was definitely very nervous and scared about the new environment. And as Miranda says, like, I heard about the social scene at UCSD and its reputation. So, I was very nervous about finding my community. So, I definitely just wanted to be more involved and find friends, especially because as soon as I moved away from home, my parents actually moved across the world back to China. So, they were even farther away from me. And I think I felt like I really needed that support system. Like around me.

Harper Estus 05:53

For me, I got involved, because I was an off-campus commuter student my first year and I was really scared about finding community. But luckily, I found M3C, which is Muir College Commuter Council. And that kind of kicked off my involvement. And from there, I was able to, like, make connections. And that's why I recommend everyone to really get involved as soon as they can the second they step foot on UCSD's campus because that's the way you're gonna get connected to people. And that's the way you're going to make your experience yours.

Danny Lu 06:23

Yeah, I definitely agree with everyone. I think when I first got to campus, I was, like, on a mission to, like, meet people. And definitely orientation week, definitely had that, so I was able to meet a lot of Marshall students from those at they kind of introduced me to a lot of the college orgs that I'm in now, and especially a lot of other student leaders and kind of what they've been doing.

Ann Hawthorne 06:46

Great. Well, with so many opportunities on campus—right? So, we have over 600 student organizations that are campus-wide, and then probably an additional 50 at the colleges. How did you figure out which student organization to join? Was that an easy process? Was it difficult? What helped you navigate that process?

Alison Wang 07:12

For me personally, my first year, I lived on campus in a triple. And both of my roommates decided to go through Panhellenic Recruitment. And we decided that it would be kind of a bonding experience for the three of us, just because we were all new to the school and we were all kind of scared. And I think that UCSD Panhellenic is very unique in a way that it's super diverse. I think sororities come with a stereotype of how everyone should look and its members. But as an Asian Canadian, I felt kind of isolated, and I was really scared. But seeing the community at UCSD in the Panhellenic community. Specifically, I felt so at home and, like, really accepted.

Luiza Tanoue Troncoso Pe 07:55

I mean, I was involved in, like, some other organizations my first year, but by far the one that has, like, has had the deepest, like, impact on me was definitely the Brazilian Student Association. And it's actually interesting how that came along. When I first, like, gotten to UCSD, there weren't—there wasn't this organization, we kind of had to start it from scratch, kind of. So, we had to go through the whole process of actually creating an org. And it was actually way more simple than I would have expected. Like the advisors helped us and me and my Brazilian friends, we got together, went through all the

paperwork, got it done, got it set up. And now we have, like, triple the amount of members than when we first started, which is actually really cool. And we got to work together. So now I'm in my third year. And it's really cool to see the progress that we've made since first year.

Ann Hawthorne 08:40

Yeah, that's, that's great. We—I have to say that the campus tries very hard to make the process of starting a new student organization as easy as possible so that we can provide as many opportunities to students as they want. Anyone else? How did they dec— How did you all decide?

Miranda Demarrais-Spero 09:01

For me personally, I just joined about as many as I could, I'm a transfer student and I was like, I'm going to take advantage of every single resource that is here because I'm only here for a limited time. So, I joined everything. And I realized quickly that I couldn't do everything that I wanted to do. And that was the kind of hard realization to come to. But I knew that I wanted to be involved with something where I could personally make a big impact and I would personally, like, have a small community as well. So that's how I knew that college-specific things were more for me than all-campus I joined a lot of major-specific stuff. I joined just a lot of, like, social groups with clubs but for me, particularly the Sixth College Organizations spoke to me because it was a small community of people that I could really get to know really well and we could make a big impact together.

Danny Lu 09:49

Yeah, I'm in the same boat as Miranda. I joined a lot of Marshall orgs, and eventually, I learned that, like, it's just too much to handle. So, I really stuck with the Active Community at Marshall, and a lot of my interests lie in community service along with student government. So, I was also a member of the Student Council at Marshall. And currently, I'm the chair for Saatchi, which is another community service org that I was part of in high school. So, I really just continued that path into college.

Harper Estus 10:22

Yeah, I mean, I think the bottom line of all of these responses is that it really depends on like, what you're interested in, and like, what type of community that you envision yourself in and, yeah, for me, I mean, I, when I entered, there's obviously the computer orgs I went to get involved in, but over time, it could get really overwhelming if you join a lot of things. So, like, over time, you kind of noticed which ones are the most impactful for you and the ones that make the most difference in your life. And I think that's how you can kind of figure out which ones you should join and then kind of stick with.

Ann Hawthorne 10:55

Great. Now I know, some of you, as you've discussed, that you're involved in both campus-wide student organizations through the Center for Student Involvement, and then student organizations at your college. So, for those of you that are involved in both, can you tell us a little bit about how those organizations differ?

Luiza Tanoue Troncoso Pe 11:18

I can go, Okay, well, right now, I'm actually not involved anymore. But my first year I did Muir College Council, in addition to like campus wide organizations. And personally, I'd say that I like both of them equally. I think they, they're very similar. But there are some differences. And I think the main difference

would be that in your college, I mean, it's a smaller group of people. So you feel like you're, I don't know, I feel like you meet more familiar faces, and you cross paths with people that you will naturally see, especially like, if you live on campus, or if you usually, like, walk around your college, like, you're going to see a lot of people that are part of like organizations within your college more than campus-wide. So, I think that's a pro, but like there are benefits for both of them. And I really love both of them.

Harper Estus 12:03

I would say from my experience, the ones that are in colleges are like smaller, smaller community. So, it's really nice to get to, like, meet everyone. But if you get into a larger organization, sometimes it's harder to make connections with every single person. But still, that's a great experience to have that many people that you can connect with, if you would like to still. Yeah,

Danny Lu 12:27

Yeah, I've noticed that a lot of college orgs focus a lot on event planning, which is a big thing within each college and trying to connect with not just the org itself, but with the entire college community. So, you also have a lot more freedom into like, what kind of events you want to work on. And you also get to work along with a lot of staff members and advisors from the college, which is a big plus. I've also noticed that for campus-wide events, because they are a bigger community, there's a bigger push to social events and finding the time to kind of meet everyone in that org.

Ann Hawthorne 13:07

What about some other benefits or something that you—you've enjoyed about being in campus wide student organizations?

Alison Wang 13:16

Personally, from Panhellenic, or the Panhellenic community, I found that there's such like a diversity of different people that I got to meet. But I also got to meet people with similar backgrounds as I am, and they're international students. I, like, one of my best friends is currently in Korea right now, and I think that's really cool. But at the end of the day, I think it's just a really supportive community where they helped me kind of grow and step out of my comfort zone, but also be there for me when my life gets a little hard, or I need some extra support. They're always just there for me, and especially because I'm so far away from home, like I really, really appreciate that.

Ann Hawthorne 13:53

And what's something positive that you could share that you've gained from your experience, and your involvement in a student organization? I think, you know, we talk a lot about the connections that you make and the friends that you make, but what else has positively impacted you because of your involvement?

Luiza Tanoue Troncoso Pe 14:15

For me, I feel like I learned so much more about myself and my interest through student organizations, I feel like it's very empowering to, like, take your time outside of class and invest it in something that you're passionate about, and really, like, learn more about yourself, what you prioritize, what you like, what you don't like, and so I think a lot of like this personal growth that I've had in college came through

my organizations and what I chose to join. So, I'd say that was probably something really positive that I got from it.

Miranda Demarrais-Spero 14:45

I can totally relate to that. I feel like I know who I am now, because of all these organizations. I got to meet so many people, not just the people in the organization who are amazing, fantastic people but also so many advisors that really were invested in me personally and really wanted to help me grow and figure out what I want to do. They would take their time, hours, sometimes, a week and—to meet with me and help me not just plan amazing things for Sixth college, but also to personally develop myself and learn what kind of person I'm going to be after college and what skills I can take from what I'm doing now in these organizations and apply them to a career down the line.

Ann Hawthorne 15:25

Since we are living in a virtual world right now—right? And at this point, there aren't people gathering on campus, all the events are occurring virtually. Do you have any advice for students trying to get involved in a student organization while navigating a virtual college experience?

Alison Wang 15:48

Some advice I definitely give is pay attention to, like, the websites that UCSD has and the resources they provide to, like, advertise all the different student organizations. I think my freshman year I, like, didn't—definitely did not pay attention to the newsletters, they would send out because there'd be like a good amount. And I didn't really pay attention to those. But I think now looking back, it was a great resource to look for new opportunities and new ways to find connections on campus, especially virtually because it's really hard to, like, find things.

Harper Estus 16:22

I would say for any student who may be, like, an incoming student and doesn't know this already—get Facebook. Facebook is a great tool for events. I know when I first started attending UCSD, I did not have one. And then everyone was telling me, "How do you think you're gonna get involved? You need Facebook." So yeah, definitely get Facebook, to connect with all the networks, a lot of organizations have certain pages that you can like or follow and then you can see all their events. And also, Facebook is good to even have just to connect with other people because Facebook will say, "Oh, your friend liked this or your friends interested in this event. Do you want to go too?" And so personally, I have found even personally this year, I've attended probably more online events for other organizations that I usually wouldn't have attended their events because of Facebook, and because of how there's so many events that are currently on there.

Luiza Tanoue Troncoso Pe 17:16

Oh, and I'd also say like, adding on to that, I completely agree. Don't be discouraged. Because it's online or like don't think it's not going to be as exciting or as like interesting because as someone who's on the other side, like the organizations are really trying to get people involved. And they're really making an effort to make sure that like even if it's online, the events are still cool that everything is still—everyone can still connect. So, don't feel discouraged because it's online, and definitely like go ahead and give it a try.

Miranda Demarrais-Spero 17:43

I would also add that it might seem scary, hopping into a zoom call and everybody seeing your face and, but it's not. Like, it's not intimidating at all. Feel free to just do that. And if it is a little intimidating to you, you get a little nervous, reach out to somebody. You usually can find the face put to the event or the name—reach out to those people. I know that I'm personally involved with the Transfer Facebook page and I've gotten a ton of messages about the College Student Council and about different orgs and how to join. I love getting those messages. It really makes me happy when I can share the knowledge that I learned with people way faster. So, they don't have to spend a year learning it for themselves. Please reach out to those people. It's kind of why we're here. We always want to speak to you.

Danny Lu 18:23

I think another big thing is, you know, you don't have to wait till the start of each quarter to join. You can join any time. We'll always welcome you into our communities.

Ann Hawthorne 18:33

Wonderful, really great advice. Thank you so much. And then what is one tool/tidbit/tip that you would give students who are interested in joining a student organization.

Danny Lu 18:51

I think one big thing is just be active, be social when you're joining you know, the best thing is having your camera on if you're able to, because that really allows us to all connect with each other. It's sometimes hard to just kind of speak to a voice especially online now. Not just turn your camera on, find ways to really connect with one another.

Miranda Demarrais-Spero 19:12

If I could give one tidbit it would be to not overthink it. Just do what you want to do. If something comes interesting to you just go. Don't overthink it. Don't worry, 'What if they like me? What if they don't? Am I gonna really vibe with these people?' No, just go and you'll see if you like it or if you don't. It's really that simple. Put in the effort, get involved, and everything will come just because you do it.

Luiza Tanoue Troncoso Pe 19:32

Yeah, I completely agree with what Miranda just said. And I feel like just be confident in yourself and know that you have so much to contribute to every single organization on campus. Like you have a unique story you are a unique person with, like, perspectives of your own and you can contribute and make, like, in your organization a better place. So, I feel like once you kind of understand that you become more confident and then you're more like open to making connections and trying new things.

Ann Hawthorne 19:57

And looking back at your first year because I know you're either seniors getting—you know, going to graduate this year, or you're—you're in your third year as juniors, is there anything you wish you'd known in your first year about getting involved or any resource that you would like to share?

Harper Estus 20:17

I think someone already said it already. But possibly, like, just remembering that the people who run the organizations really are there to help you, and they want to talk with you, they want you to join. So, if

you're just even thinking about like, oh, maybe this organization, maybe that organization, just like, try to talk to people that are in the organization to get involved, because that's just—they're there to help you. And just like, make sure you just reach out and like, this goes to resources as well, or like staff members that you can contact, just reach out, try to make as many connections as you can, because you are in charge of your own college experience. And like, I think it's not emphasized enough, but like, this is your experience. And you need to make it for yourself. So, get involved.

Luiza Tanoue Troncoso Pe 20:59

I'd also say like time flies, when, when you're a freshman, everyone will tell you like, "Oh, time flies," and you kind of like don't believe them. But as someone who's in my third year, and literally feel like I had just started college yesterday, time really does fly. So, like don't think that oh, I'll just join next year, or oh, I'll just join it later, because as COVID shows, you never know what tomorrow holds. So, like, do it today. Like if you're interested in it, go for it. Like you're probably going to really enjoy it.

Miranda Demarrais-Spero 21:24

I wish that I had known that I was competent. And I was meant to be there. Impostor Syndrome is such a real thing. And UCSD is such a good school. Sometimes people get there and they're like, I'm not meant to be here. I got in by mistake. It's not true. You're meant to be there these things that are here for you. You're meant to do them. Just go do them. Don't worry about it. Yes, please talk to everybody and get as much information as you want. But you are competent enough to take on whatever you want to take on. Don't let stress get the better of you, you got this.

Danny Lu 21:53

Yeah, I think just make the most out of your time. If you got free time during your first year, definitely just go out there. You know, get online, join an org. You got free time? Do something with it.

Alison Wang 22:04

I definitely think that, like everyone has said, don't be afraid to, you know, participate in things, because you never know what you're gonna get out of it. And most of the time, it's a very positive experience. If you don't—even if you don't, like, end up being a part of the organization in following years, like, the time that you spent there, the connections you've made would have made a great impact in your life.

Ann Hawthorne 22:26

Well, Ally, Louisa Harper, Miranda, Danny, I want to thank you so much for everything that you've shared today. It was great hearing about each of your personal experiences with student organizations and the impact and meaning that your involvement has had on your time at UCSD so far. And I really, really appreciate you being here. And hopefully, you've inspired some of your fellow Tritons to join a student organization. So, thank you all so much. Before we wrap up, I'd like to share a little bit more about the Center for Student Involvement. CSI is the hub for over 600 student organizations representing 20 different categories. There's everything from social and cultural organizations, to sorority and fraternity life, to political and educational orgs, and much, much more. And if we don't have a student organization you're interested in, it's easy to start one. All you need to do is find two other students to serve as principal members with you and follow the registration tips found on our website: getinvolved.ucsd.edu. If you're interested in learning more about some of the student organizations that were talked about today, please visit studentorg.ucsd.edu and join UCSD Online Week Six, specifically,

November 12th, at 10am through November 13th at 5pm for a fall virtual student organization fair. Visit with student organization members who will be on hand to connect and chat live. Visit a virtual affairs.ucsd.edu for more information. Thank you for experiencing our podcast on how to get involved in student organizations at UC San Diego. I'm Ann Hawthorne, I hope you have a great week and we'll see you back next week on Triton Tools & Tidbits.