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White House Announces MetroLab Network Partnership Between City of San Diego and UC San Diego

Collaboration to Use Innovation, Expertise to Solve Civic Challenges Such as Traffic, Parking and Infrastructure



Photo by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

On Sept. 14, Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer and UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla announced their participation as founding members of the recently created MetroLab Network.

The Network, announced at the White House Smart Cities Forum, seeks to strengthen and create partnerships between metro areas and their respective universities to research, develop and deploy innovative technologies

to address challenges facing the nation's urban areas.

New technologies present a unique opportunity to solve challenges in the arenas of infrastructure, city services and civic engagement. Universities possess the expertise to develop and implement the technologies while city governments possess the knowledge and information necessary to deploy these technologies in real-world settings.

“The City is partnering with UC San Diego’s brightest minds to solve some of San Diego’s biggest challenges, from traffic to parking to infrastructure,” said Mayor Faulconer. “San Diego leads in research and innovation and this will capitalize on UC San Diego’s academic resources to create real-world solutions that improve the lives of city residents. The MetroLab Network is a great opportunity to increase collaboration between the educational and civic worlds, and I’m excited to see the results.”

Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla of UC San Diego said the new partnership is part of many town-and-gown collaborations between the university and the city. “We look forward to working with the mayor and local communities to tackle our common challenges and improve city services,” the chancellor said. “At UC San Diego, we are committed to advancing knowledge and creating new technology for the benefit of our society.”

The MetroLab Network will provide the opportunity to share successes, address challenges, and build shared platforms for experimentation and data between cities and universities necessary to increase the tangible results of new innovations.

Conceptually, the MetroLab Network is based on previous successes of technologies developed from established City/University partnerships. These partnerships have produced innovative transportation and water infrastructure projects that have increased the efficiency and reduced the environmental impact of infrastructure systems.

By becoming partners of the Network, both the City of San Diego and UC San Diego are committing to collaboration focused on smart solutions to challenges, not only in their home metro of San Diego, but throughout the cities that have partnered in the MetroLab Network. In addition to the City of San Diego and UC San Diego, 20 other cities and counties and 25 universities are founding members of the Network.

UC San Diego Vice Chancellor for Research Sandra A. Brown, who attended the White House forum and participated in the MetroLab Kickoff Workshop, said both the university and the City of San Diego benefit from problem-solving partnerships. “Our public university’s mission includes service to our community,” Brown said. “The MetroLab Network arising from the White House’s ‘Smart Cities’ Initiative gives both partners the opportunity to solve mutual problems.”

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation generously provided \$1 million in support of the launch of the MetroLab Network. MacArthur’s grant is one of a small number of investments by the Foundation in efforts to use data and information technologies to better understand how cities work and to improve the urban condition.

“The Metro Lab Network will catalyze research, development and demonstration projects that will benefit urban residents, environments and communities,” said Alaina Harkness, Program Officer for the MacArthur Foundation. “Working together, the Network partners will pool knowledge, share resources and boost their collective ability to make cities work better.”

The first actions this newly formed network will undertake include organizing a series of workshops between founding members to determine the parameters of Network collaboration and appointing an executive director to manage the affairs of the Network.

More information on the MetroLab Network and its founding partners can be found at metrolabnetwork.org.

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