



## STAFF SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK

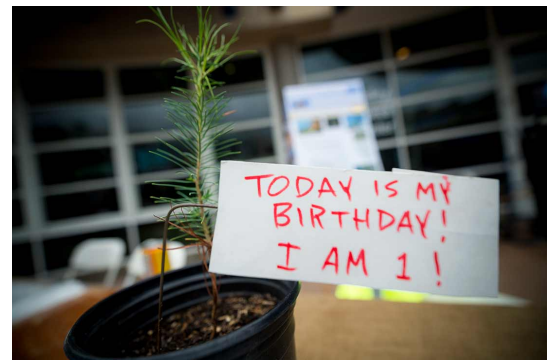
A UC San Diego Staff Association

### New Campus Staff Association Helps Sow Seeds of Sustainability

For Chris Johnson and his fellow groundskeepers Andre Leon and Michael Scarry, growing their own trees and planting them on campus seemed like one of the most sustainable things they could do. It was this belief that led them to start making their own compost and growing their own plants in their spare time two years ago. Now, their efforts have earned them the first-ever grant from the Staff Sustainability Network, one of the campus's newest staff associations and the only organization of its kind within the University of California system.

“Our goal with this grant is to encourage staff ideas and participation in reaching UC San Diego’s sustainability goals,” said Sasha Doppelt, chair of the Staff Sustainability Network. “The trees that Chris, Andre and Michael are growing will be incorporated into the campus landscape, offering shade and shelter, reducing energy and water usage, and saving the campus money on purchasing plant material from outside sources. We’re thrilled to support their work.”

Funds from the \$630 grant will go toward purchasing native plant seeds, containers, soil and heat mats for germination. Johnson and his colleagues already have two small nurseries with several hundred plants – mostly succulents, bulbs, Torrey Pine and orchid trees – which they have been giving away and using for projects. Last year on Earth Day, they planted Torrey



*A Torrey Pine planted on Earth Day last year sits on display at the Earth Day Fair in Price Center Plaza. Photo by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications*

Pine seeds that they had gathered and prepared on campus. Those seeds have now germinated into 10-inch tall seedlings that were re-planted on campus this month. They are also planting additional Torrey Pine seeds in Price Center Plaza as part of Earth Week.

“We hope to keep providing some of the trees for use on campus,” said Johnson. “Ultimately, we’d like to see a dedicated space on campus for a nursery, a composting facility and an arboretum, all focused on sustainability.”

Until they were awarded the grant from the Staff Sustainability Network, the trio’s efforts had been largely self-funded, with many of the nursery supplies and plants being donated. The three groundskeepers also became adept at re-using and re-purposing items for their nurseries.



*Students plant Torrey Pine seeds at the Earth Day Fair in Price Center Plaza.  
Photo by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications*

“We have most of the supplies we need to continue our small operation, but it’s really inspiring to get some attention and funding for our project,” said Johnson. “We’re very grateful to the Staff Sustainability Network for this opportunity.”

Officially launched in September 2014, the Staff Sustainability Network came about as the result of a sustainability Town Hall meeting held in May 2013. Gayle Ta, treasurer for the network and one of its initial founders, recalls that many of the town hall attendees felt uninformed about

sustainability on campus.

“People had ideas about how to improve our environmental impact, but didn’t know where to start,” she said. “Others wanted to connect with individuals who shared their passion for sustainability. A group of us decided to form a staff association to help address these concerns.”

Ta, who works in Procurement, joined forces with other sustainably-minded staff including Ashley Ghambir and Kristin Kielich from the Office of Strategic Initiatives, Kim Kane from Geisel Library and Sasha Doppelt from the Center for Energy Research. The group met not long after the Town Hall and began planning what would later become the Staff Sustainability Network.

“We really serve as a hub to foster sustainability efforts on campus and in the community,” said Ta. “We’re trying new things such as the staff project grants – which we’ll continue in the future – hosting events, and encouraging people to get involved and share their ideas with us.”



Staff Sustainability Network Chair elect Mark Ortiz.

With water conservation a priority on campus and throughout California, Ta says they will begin encouraging more involvement with water conservation projects and will look at forming a working group to tackle staff education and projects around water efficiency.

“The more we can raise awareness and involve staff in this effort, as well as in other sustainability efforts, the greater our impact will be,” she said.

The Staff Sustainability Network hosts monthly meetings that are open for anyone, member or nonmember, to attend. For more information, visit their [website](#) or contact Brian Pierini, membership chair, at [bpierini@ucsd.edu](mailto:bpierini@ucsd.edu).

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