



Twenty-three individuals, departments and organizational units were recognized on March 2 at the annual Diversity Awards for outstanding contributions in support of UC San Diego's commitment to diversity. Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

Honoring UC San Diego's Diversity Champions

22nd annual Diversity Awards recognize exceptional contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion

Jason Dorwart believes everyone should play a role in the arts as creators, not merely consumers. Currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Theatre and Dance at UC San Diego, he is committed to engaging diverse populations in performing arts. Before beginning his doctoral studies at UC San Diego, Dorwart performed with the Denver-based Phamaly Theatre Company, one of the few professional theater groups in the world made up entirely of disabled actors. He is working to cultivate this same sense of community among disability studies scholars on campus.

Dorwart was among 23 individuals, departments and organizational units recognized for outstanding contributions in support of UC San Diego's commitment to diversity. Recipients of the 22nd Annual Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action and Diversity Awards were honored at a ceremony on March 2 at Price Center West Ballroom. All were celebrated for their standout efforts to make a positive impact, from tackling bias in the workplace to increasing underrepresented students in STEM.

"We recognize and honor the great work these individuals and departments have achieved in promoting equity and inclusion at UC San Diego," said Chancellor Pradeep K.

Khosla. "They have gone above and beyond to make diversity a priority, a charge shared by everyone on campus."

In 2016, UC San Diego admitted its most diverse class of freshman and transfer students. In addition, the campus was named the top university in the nation for enrolling and graduating the most women in STEM. And initiatives like the LEAD (Leaders for Equity, Advancement and Diversity) Fellows Program serve to train staff and senior administrators to become peer diversity educators who engage and lead crucial conversations around improving organizational learning and campus climate.

Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Becky Pettit, expressed gratitude for those who work tirelessly to lead change. "I value your experience and your ideas, your commitment and your passion to making UC San Diego a better place. Your contributions are a testament to the fact that we all have a responsibility to create and maintain a healthy university community."



Theatre and Dance Ph.D. candidate Jason Dorwart is committed to engaging diverse populations in performing arts and cultivating an empowering environment for all.



Since arriving at UC San Diego, Dorwart, who is a quadriplegic, has actively pursued the creation of new projects at the intersection of activism, critical inquiry and the arts. Recently appointed lead editor of the Department of Theatre and Dance's *TheatreForum* publication, he has launched a new recurring feature that will focus on diversity-in-performance. Stories highlight the integration of marginalized identities into the overall landscape of theatrical work across international stages.

"I think it is important for everyone to recognize the need for diversity and inclusion in their own lives and in all of their work," said Dorwart. "Nobody has all of the answers, but if we can talk openly, and most importantly, listen to how others feel, then we can at least create an environment where everyone is heard, understood and empowered."

Dorwart has also helped to develop, implement and perform in the Workplace Interactive Theatre (WIT), a production founded in 2014 and led by UC San Diego Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance Emily Roxworthy. WIT is designed to help ‘outwit’ patterns of unconscious bias and microaggressions through theatrical role play. The performance, which has toured all 10 University of California campuses, provided an authentic glimpse of real dynamics, as well as an opportunity to imagine and work through solutions collectively.

Jennifer Burney, another award recipient who is a UC San Diego Faculty Equity Advisor, has also dedicated her time to examining hiring practices and establishing a structure for evaluation that is fair and inclusive. An assistant professor at UC San Diego’s School of Global Policy and Strategy, Burney created “Faculty Equity Guidelines for Searches,” a best practices reference that includes overarching principles for those involved in recruitment and hiring efforts.

“It’s hard to change the biases we all develop early in life, so you have to have practices in place to make sure that you assess candidates based on their merits as opposed to your gut reaction,” said Burney. “At GPS, we have developed a set of guidelines for how we talk about candidates and how we look at their files. We ensure everyone is treated the same way when they visit, and seek feedback on things that really matter.”

When Burney first arrived at UC San Diego as a postdoc six years ago, she joined the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Issues, a group of faculty, staff and students who advise the Chancellor on issues relating to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community at UC San Diego. Significant milestones of the committee include the recommendation and establishment of the UC San Diego LGBT Resource Center in 1999, initiating changes in undergraduate housing matching and advocating for more gender-inclusive facilities on campus.

“It is a privilege to be able to advocate for these groups on campus,” said Burney, who also serves as a mentor for QuIRPS, the GPS student organization for LGBTQ students. “It’s a really exciting and unique committee to be involved with because it represents a true cross-section of our broad university community who are working together to enhance equality on our campus.”



Professor Jennifer Burney dedicates her time as a Faculty Excellence Advisor and as an advocate for issues affecting the LGBTQI community at UC San Diego.

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