

Preuss School Teacher Selected as California's Nominee for National Teacher of the Year

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Pat JaCoby

Kelly Kovacic, social studies department chair at UC San Diego's Preuss School and a UCSD alumna, has been named as California's nominee for the prestigious National Teacher of the Year competition.

Kovacic's selection was announced by Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, during a Nov. 5 press conference held in her crowded 11th and 12th grade Preuss School classroom and attended by state and local education officials. Peter and Peggy Preuss, benefactors for whom the school is named, were on hand to congratulate the nominee.

Kovacic served as a volunteer at The Preuss School while she was attending classes as an undergraduate at UC San Diego. She graduated from UCSD in 2000, and earned a Master of Arts degree in education from Stanford University, where she also received a California Professional Clear Credential. She has taught at The Preuss School for seven years.

O'Connell chose Kovacic to represent California in the national competition from among five selected as 2010 state Teachers of the Year. "I am delighted that Kelly is representing California at the national level," O'Connell said. "She is an exceptionally knowledgeable and effective teacher, demonstrating an unparalleled passion and commitment to her students and school community that extends beyond the school day and the school yard."

The State Superintendent told the classroom of students, who will be the first in their families to graduate from a university, that he also "was the first in his family to set foot on a college campus, and the first to graduate from college."

Kovacic, who once said she was "throw-up nervous" when interviewed for her first job at Preuss School, was poised and eloquent as she accepted the state honor. "I am so proud of the educational community at Preuss," she said. "Each day I am faced with amazing students...these students and those sitting in classrooms throughout the state are our future."

"On behalf of the entire UC San Diego community, I congratulate Kelly," said UC San Diego Chancellor Marye Anne Fox. "She and the Preuss School teachers and staff continue to bring a diversity of skill, dedication, experience and expertise to this nationally recognized school."

The State Superintendent annually selects five Teachers of the Year who best represent California's teachers and symbolize the profession's top quality education by focusing public attention on their noteworthy accomplishments. The competition is open to educators who teach pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. County Offices of Education nominate winners of their regional Teacher of the Year competition.

The national Teacher of the Year will be selected in the spring of 2010 by a panel representing the Obama administration. All candidates in the program will be honored at a White House ceremony.

The Preuss School at UC San Diego is a middle and high school dedicated to providing an intensive college preparation for motivated low-income students who will become the first in their families to graduate from college. The school is jointly chartered by UC San Diego and the San Diego Unified School District.

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