

## Contingent from UC San Diego Takes Stage at TEDx San Diego

If TED Talks are all about “Ideas Worth Spreading,” then the University of California, San Diego—the most well-represented institution at TEDx San Diego—is clearly fertile ground for those ideas to take seed, flourish and grow.

TEDx San Diego is an independently organized, official spin-off of the popular TED Conference, which takes place annually in Long Beach, Calif., and gets its name from its focus on technology, entertainment and design. TED invites the world’s leading thinkers and doers to speak for 18 minutes and then makes those talks available, at no cost, via TED.com.

Past TED speakers have included Bill Gates, Al Gore, Jane Goodall, Elizabeth Gilbert and Sir Richard Branson, to name a few.

Four of the TEDx San Diego’s 26 speakers at the Dec. 3 event hailed from UC San Diego, including Tony Haymet, vice chancellor for marine sciences and director of Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Veerabhadran Ramanathan, a distinguished professor of atmospheric and climate sciences at Scripps, James Fowler, professor of medical genetics and political science, and Saura Naderi, of the UCSD division of the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2), who is founder of UCSD My Lab.

Other notable speakers at the second annual TEDx San Diego included actor and founder of the Dreyfuss Initiative Richard Dreyfuss, life coach and writer Martha Beck, and best-selling author and filmmaker Amy Krouse Rosenthal.

The young, wired and inspired turned out in full force for the event, filling the 543-seat Qualcomm auditorium in Sorrento Valley to maximum capacity and, at one point, bringing down the wireless giant’s in-house Wi-Fi service with their laptops and smartphones. The event boasted its own mobile app and was broadcast in real time via webcast and live social media updates. A number of the talks tapped into the most cutting-edge technological trends in aeronautics, marine biology, medicine, computer science and engineering.



*Tony Haymet at a TEDx event in 2010*



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But TEDx San Diego also had a distinctly low-tech slant. Soon after the Wi-Fi outage, attendees were asked to “be present” throughout the day, to power off their phones and, in the words of TEDx San Diego founder Jack Abbott, “to reflect, engage and question.” Rather than being encouraged to Tweet their observations, attendees were given bright red journals, and from the stage, graphic artist Jeannel King recorded the talks in real time with good old fashioned ink-on-paper. Instruction was offered during breaks between presentations that included self-help messaging by “horse whisperer” Koelle Simpson, a classical music performance by the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s Robert Gupta and a lesson in cultivating the intuition via “technologies of magic” by Martha Beck.

The theme for this year’s TEDx San Diego was “The

World in Our Grasp,” which was inspired in part by the words of English author Colin Wilson: “The mind has exactly the same power as the hands; not merely to grasp the world, but to change it.” Speakers addressed four themes relevant to this idea, including how change begins with the self, extends out to the community and eventually becomes a global phenomenon.

Ramanathan of UCSD, who is a member of various prestigious science academies, discussed his efforts to mitigate global warming and improve the health of women and families around the world through Project Surya, an initiative to introduce cleaner cooking technologies to underdeveloped regions and simultaneously measure health and climate outcomes.



*Veerabhadran Ramanathan*

Naderi, an alumna of the UCSD Jacobs School of Engineering, talked about her passion for introducing engineering skills to disadvantaged and underrepresented students through hands-on projects that are not just practical, but fun.

“Apparently, when you package the hard stuff with the fun stuff you get a win-win situation,” said Naderi, who wore an electronic sign of her own creation during the performance. “Kids having fun while learning! It’s like flavored cough syrup.”



ler pictured at a TEDx event in 2010

A fourth session, titled “Seeds of Change,” brought back speakers from the previous year’s event, including Haymet and Fowler. Haymet, who is also the co-founder of CleanTECH San Diego, imagined a world where one could “run the weather backward” and not only see carbon emissions, but also see where they were coming from.

Fowler, an expert on social networks and behavioral economics, revisited some of the data he had collected at the 2010 TEDx San Diego to measure how speakers and participants at the event connected via Twitter. In a nod to

Mahatma Gandhi, Fowler urged the attendees to “be the change you wish to see in your networks.”

All 26 TEDx San Diego talks will eventually be available for viewing at <http://www.tedx-sandiego.com/>. To see a flickr feed from the event, go to: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tedxsandiego/>

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