

## Convocation Keynote Urges Students to See World Through Eyes of Those With Different Point of View



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*Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications*

Just a few weeks ago, UC San Diego professor Carol Padden, an expert in language, communication and culture, was riding in the back of a tractor, traveling between two small farming villages in the southern part of Turkey. Why was she there? To help a graduate student begin her career in communication by studying a newly formed example of sign language in the region, with the goal of eventually discovering how this language came to life.

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Padden's recent arduous travels are just a small part of the professor's efforts to achieve her mission at UC San Diego: helping students succeed. Padden, a UC San Diego alumna, relayed this mission in her keynote address to thousands of incoming freshmen and transfer students on RIMAC Field Tuesday evening as part of the campus's annual new student Welcome Convocation.

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Convocation, which headlined the more than 150 Welcome Week activities, is the university's ceremony to mark the official entrance of new freshmen and transfer students to the campus community.

Communication has played an especially integral role in Padden's life. She was born deaf to a deaf family and was raised bilingually in English and American Sign Language. She attended public schools and was often the only deaf child among hearing classmates. At the end of school, she would return home to her deaf parents and brother. Her interest in language and communicating across cultures was rooted in her experience of moving back and forth between those two different worlds.

Padden's address was preceded by a welcome from Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla, who also underscored the importance of UC San Diego's mission as a student-centered, research-focused, service-oriented public university.

"We are here for you, our students, to provide you with the best possible college experience," said Khosla. "We will give you the tools and opportunities you need to develop into successful global citizens. We want you to be change agents of this world and positively impact our society."

## Tweets



**SherryMallory**

"Make full use of your time here; it is material you will use for the rest of your life" ~

#ucsdconvocation  
speaker Carol Padden



**alextranthee...**

@UCSanDiego  
Convocation  
is...LITERALLY...the best.  
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Padden also commended UC San Diego's new students for their accomplishments and the breadth of their knowledge.

"You may think you have come here to learn things," she said.

"But realize this: you are a generation of students who know a lot already. You have had access to a world of information and knowledge in ways that we never had. I grew up with two bookshelves of encyclopedias. You grew up with Wikipedia and Google Search. I took a typing class in high school; you were already typing in elementary school."

Padden's academic career has flourished at UC San Diego. Upon earning her Ph.D. in linguistics at UC San Diego in 1983, she began teaching in the communication department and recently celebrated her 30th year as a professor. Padden is also associate



**LugoSteph**  
Carol Padden was so  
inspirational. I love her  
speech.  
#ucsdconvocation

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dean in the Division of Social Sciences and an affiliate of the  
Center for Research in Language, the Human Development  
education studies.

In 2010, she was a recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, a highly acclaimed prize awarded annually to U.S. citizens who show exceptional promise for continued and enhanced creative work. The award recognized her pioneering research on the unique structure and evolution of sign languages—how they differ from spoken language and from each other—and on the specific social implications of signed communication.

Having spent almost her entire adult life at a university, Padden is uniquely positioned to highlight the benefits of higher education.

“A university education is not just about courses you will take and the friends you make here, but it’s about becoming a person,” she said. “Being here, you will find out who you really are and what you are really capable of.”

She continued, “Learn your value system and your own truth, and how to apply this insight in any area of study. Acquire flexibility in your point of view: see the world from the eyes of someone who lives in a world very different from this one.”

Padden stressed the important role faculty will play in the students’ experience at UC San Diego.

“Our faculty are here to teach you. I will keep my door open, should any of you want to come and talk about how to become a person, or maybe something more concrete such as how to get a research internship in my lab ... This is a pledge I gladly make, and I know our faculty feel the same way. Make full use of your time here. It will be material you will use for the rest of your life.”

Following Padden’s keynote address, students flocked to the picnic area on RIMAC field where they were offered a dinner and opportunities to meet staff and faculty from various academic departments.



Carol Padden

Muir College freshman Dejanay Wayne said that Padden’s speech inspired her to approach more faculty members while she is a student at UC San Diego. “She helped change my opinion,” she said. “I am more excited to learn from faculty. They will be a huge resource!”

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