

Younger Siblings Get Snapshot of College Life as Part of Inaugural Siblings Weekend



Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

An amazing race, an inflatable obstacle course, and a “green eggs and ham” breakfast were just a few of the family-friendly activities that were enjoyed by UC San Diego students and their brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, cousins, and others during the campus’s inaugural Siblings Weekend.

The new tradition, held Jan. 11 to 12, was initiated to offer younger family members of UC San Diego students the opportunity to learn more about UC San Diego and college life. Most importantly, the weekend was established to create positive memories among UC San Diego students and their families, according to Laci Weeden, director of UC San Diego’s Parent and Family Programs.

“We sometimes forget how much the younger siblings are missing their brother or sister who is away at college, so this is an opportunity for them to spend some special time together,” Weeden said.

Weeden added that studies show college students earn higher grades and are more likely to graduate when their parents and families are involved in their life.

UC San Diego’s Siblings Weekend kicked off with a “Triton tailgate” Friday night where participants socialized and had a barbecue before the UC San Diego men’s basketball game against Chico State.



On Saturday, students and their siblings took part in a Seuss-inspired breakfast. The breakfast was followed by several interactive educational events, including an egg drop challenge where undergraduates from the student engineering organization TESC helped participants construct a model strong enough to keep an egg from breaking after being dropped from the first, second and third floors of Engineering Building II.

In addition, students and siblings toured campus hot spots, such as the Calit2 facility and Fallen Star, located atop Jacobs Hall. Fallen Star is the 18th permanent sculpture commissioned by UC San Diego’s Stuart Art Collection.

Jehoan Espinoza, a sophomore at Sixth College, and his younger brother, Mark, participated in the egg drop challenge activity and several other Siblings Weekend events.

Espinoza said that he wanted his 10-year-old brother to be a part of the challenge because of his interest in building games. “Maybe he will major in engineering when he gets to

college,” he said.

Other popular events on Saturday included an “amazing race” competition in which teams had to solve clues to guide them to their next destination. As the teams raced around UC San Diego’s campus, they learned about the university’s history and traditions.

At lunchtime, participants gathered on the Sun God lawn where there was a picnic and beach-themed inflatable obstacle course, which was braved by students and siblings of all ages.

Breanna Caso, a UC San Diego freshman, enjoyed the picnic with her younger sister, Nicole; younger cousin, Joaquin; and father, Oscar Caso, an alum who graduated from UC San Diego in 1991.

“This is a good bonding experience and it’s inspiring,” Oscar said. “You have to get children interested in college from the very beginning. When my daughter Breanna was younger, I would take her to engineering events to get her inspired, and now she is a nanoengineering major here at UC San Diego.”

Joaquin, a junior in high school, said he too is interested in pursuing engineering when he is in college, and he loved getting a glimpse of the college experience at UC San Diego.

“I have enjoyed everything so far,” Joaquin said. “It’s made me more excited about going to college. I can see myself here, working in the labs.”

In the evening, Siblings Weekend activities came to a close with a family dinner in the Student Services Center followed by a community service project where attendees made blankets for Project Linus to benefit children’s hospitals in the San Diego area.

Espinoza attended the family dinner with his parents and brother, Mark. They also participated in family weekend during the fall. “I am the first one to go to college in my family, so it’s important that they get to see where I study and live and get a feel for what college is like...It’s a first for both of us.”

The weekend overall was a great success, according to Weeden. “Parents shared that they were glad that their younger children were able to spend some quality time with their UC San Diego brother or sister,” she said. “And our students said they had fun. A few children shared that they now want to attend UC San Diego when they go to college. It’s nice to hear that they are in the mindset of thinking ‘*when* they go to college.’ “

For more information on UC San Diego’s Parents and Family Program, go to: <http://parents.ucsd.edu/>.

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