

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

By Kristin Schafgans

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The UC San Diego Student Foundation is dedicated to fostering a culture of philanthropy on campus

Class of 2017 Leaves their Legacy with the Senior Class Gift

Like nearly 6,000 other undergraduates soon to receive UC San Diego diplomas, Jackie Nguyen is thinking about what the future will hold after she obtains that hard-earned degree. The general biology major will be moving to northern California to begin a Doctor of Optometry program at UC Berkeley in August. Yet, she also is thinking a lot about the university she is leaving behind—and the future generations of students who will pursue their dreams at UC San Diego.

Nguyen is one of many graduating seniors who are leaving their legacy at UC San Diego by contributing to the Senior Class Gift. With a donation of \$20.17, in honor of their graduating class, each graduate can support scholarships for incoming students, or another campus initiative that sparks

their passion.

“This is my chance as a graduating senior to thank UC San Diego for all the opportunities the university has provided me to pursue my dreams and achieve my lifelong goals,” said Nguyen. “It’s my way of leaving a legacy at our institution, and helping ensure that future Tritons receive the same opportunities.”

The Senior Class Gift tradition was established in 1991 as a way for outgoing seniors to leave a legacy at the university. The annual campaign, which is managed by the UC San Diego Student Foundation, encourages undergraduates to make a small but meaningful contribution that, when combined with gifts from their peers, will create scholarship opportunities for future students.

“For seniors, \$20.17 can mean giving up four Starbucks drinks in a year, saving six cents a day, or staying in one night instead of going out,” said Nguyen, who also is a trustee of the Student Foundation. “When combined with others, their gift can turn into a \$2,017 scholarship for an incoming student.”



Graduating students sign the Class of 2017 plaque, which will be installed on Library Walk.



Caitlin Villareal

The Senior Class Gift Scholarship is one of the reasons Caitlin Villareal is at UC San Diego. The first-year mechanical engineering major thought community college was the only financially viable option for her. Then she found out about the scholarship which, when coupled with financial aid, enabled her to choose UC San Diego.

“The scholarship has really helped ease my transition to UC San Diego,” she said. “It has also motivated me to try even harder in school. Receiving this scholarship provided a wonderful opportunity for me, and doing well in my classes is my way of reminding myself to be grateful every day for that.”

Giving back and fostering a culture of philanthropy is at the heart of the Student Foundation’s mission. Established in 1999 with a \$100,000 gift from UC San Diego alumni Patricia, ’83 and Marc, ’79 Brutton, the UC San Diego Student Foundation is the first of

its kind in the University of California system and one of just a few similar organizations nationwide. The Student Foundation teaches undergraduates how to fundraise and manage an endowment while supporting campus initiatives that are important to students.

In addition to the Senior Class Gift, the Student Foundation organizes events and donation drives throughout the year to encourage all UC San Diego students to give back. In the 2015-16 academic year, the foundation raised \$47,000 from 1,105 student and alumni donors.



The Senior Class Gift committee. From left to right: Rohan Shah, Lara Wallace, Gillian Belk, Danielle Aron, Jackie Nguyen (Senior Class Gift Chair '17), Angie Aguilar, Savanna Huynh.

For Nguyen, graduation day will be an opportunity to celebrate not just her academic and personal accomplishments, but also the contributions she and her peers have made to the campus.

“The fact that I’ve been able to help fellow Tritons attend UC San Diego and pursue their dreams is something I am very proud to play a part in,” she said. “It is our responsibility to pay it forward and make sure the next generation of Tritons will be granted the same opportunities and more.”

Graduating seniors can give to the Senior Class Gift—which counts toward the Campaign for UC

San Diego—through the university’s Crowdsurf platform. For more information about the Student Foundation, visit studentfoundation.ucsd.edu.

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