

Outstanding Graduates from Class of 2014 Share Their Stories



Damini Tandon

Outstanding Senior Award Winner—Warren Senior Damini Tandon a Tireless Advocate for Health Education and Medical Access

A standout leader and tireless health education promoter, **Damini Tandon** has been named this year's Outstanding Senior. A bioengineering-biotechnology major graduating from Warren College, Tandon's work focuses on increasing access to medical care for underserved communities in San Diego and abroad.

For the past year, she has served as president of Student Health Advocates, a peer health education program that conducts outreach and events for students on campus. After being selected through a competitive process in her freshman year, Tandon took the initiative to lead FITstop assessments—free fitness tests for students—before going on to oversee the entire program.

Tandon's goal is to become a surgeon, and she plans on applying to medical school in the next year. Yet she has already begun working with people in need. As a patient assistance volunteer for the Student-Run Free Health Clinic, organized by the UC San Diego School of Medicine, Tandon cares for underserved populations by facilitating the delivery of free medications and care. Also, as a member of Alternative Breaks—a UC San Diego student organization that conducts service trips around the world—Tandon helped plan a service trip to Nicaragua this summer, where her group will educate the community about oral hygiene and nutrition as well as refurbish the water system to improve clean water access to the village of Santa Julia.

Upon graduation, Tandon will prepare for her career in medicine by working as a student clinical research coordinator and scribe in the emergency department of Thornton Hospital.

Outstanding Graduate Award Winner—Materials Science and Engineering Grad Michael Porter a Master Collaborator and Mentor



Michael Porter

His design inspiration comes from natural systems—like the tail of a seahorse, which can uniquely compress as a result of being composed of small plate-like bones that slide past each other. Named this year's Outstanding Graduate award winner, **Michael Porter** is both an exceptional scholar and engaging mentor to undergraduates and local youth.

His research on flexible robotics has been featured in more than 100 media outlets and publications, including Popular Science and Scientific American. Over the past three years as a Ph.D. candidate in the department of materials science and engineering at UC San Diego, Porter maintained a 4.0 GPA, published 11 papers, and delivered 14 national and international talks.

In addition to his research, Porter actively mentored the next generation of engineers. He donated his time to community outreach, presenting at local elementary and high schools and leading laboratory tours, communicating technically difficult topics across diverse ethnic, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds.

A highly rated teaching assistant at UC San Diego, Porter built confidence and capability among the undergraduate students that he mentored. Many of his mentees became co-authors on his publications.

A master collaborator, Porter forged partnerships with six academic departments and nine institutions across four continents. His leadership resulted in numerous awards, including a Gordon Fellowship and National Science Foundation Innovation Corps Award. He will continue to build upon his work in bio-inspired design as assistant professor in mechanical engineering at Clemson University upon graduation.



Juliet Okoroh

Medical Grad Juliet Okoroh Driven by Desire to Improve Public Health Among Underserved Communities Across the Globe

Juliet Okoroh recently completed the PRIME-Heq (Program in Medical Education-Health Equity) program at the UC San Diego School of Medicine, specializing in general surgery. Okoroh, who grew up in Nigeria, would like to improve the quality of healthcare for marginalized people around the globe, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Prior to arriving at UC San Diego, Okoroh gained perspective on the need for improved communication between healthcare policymakers, clinicians and vulnerable populations as a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. The experience reinforced her desire to give back and work to resolve health disparities.

In addition to working with San Diego populations in need, Okoroh traveled to South Africa to work on issues related to HIV transmission and child abuse as part of the PRIME-Heq program. She also dedicated her time to mentoring the next generation of health professionals by taking part in Doc-for-a-Day, encouraging high school and undergraduate students to pursue a career in public health.



Jacqueline Guan

Eleanor Roosevelt College Senior Jacqueline Guan Traveled World to Support Underserved Students

An international studies major and education studies minor, **Jacqueline Guan** has traveled the world to support underserved students in need. A graduating senior from Eleanor Roosevelt College (ERC), Guan traveled to Belize in 2011 to help plan curriculum and lead learning activities at a local elementary school. The following year she worked with disabled students in Istanbul, where she helped form a community garden and facilitated classroom

lessons. On campus, Guan served as a resident advisor for more than 80 international and American students at the International House, ensuring a positive community experience.

Guan played an integral role in organizing the Math Tutor Corps, a partnership between ERC and CREATE (Center for Research on Educational Equity, Assessment & Teaching Equity). The program connects UC San Diego students with underserved high school students at Lincoln High School. Since the beginning of October, more than 25 students have joined, serving as positive role models and motivating students to pursue a college education.



Nan Renner

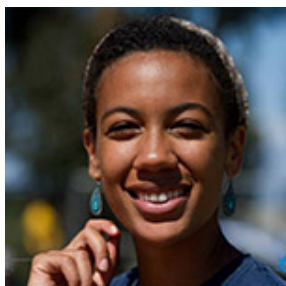
Graduate Student Nan Renner Used Cognitive Science to Study How Children Learn at Science Museums

Nan Renner is a life-long champion of learning in informal settings. Arriving at UC San Diego with two decades of experience as a museum exhibit designer, Renner pursued a Ph.D. in cognitive science to equip her with the technical and conceptual tools needed to design exhibits that maximize learning.

Drawing upon studies in anthropology, linguistics, psychology and cognitive neuroscience, she assessed how children participate, socialize and acquire

knowledge at science museums.

Since finishing her dissertation in October, Renner has taken on the role of director of the Art of Science Learning—Incubator of Innovation, a local program that uses the arts to spark creativity and innovation in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) learning. Organized by the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership, the program is facilitated by a cross-disciplinary team of artists, educators and business leaders who lead collaborative projects based on STEM-related civic challenges.



Lorato Anderson

A Star on the Track and in the Classroom, Revelle Graduate Lorato Anderson Found a Love for Teaching at UC San Diego

Lorato Anderson, a literature/writing major, is graduating from Revelle College with honors and a passion for teaching. She plans to pursue an MFA and aims to teach at the University of Botswana, where she is looking forward to “being a part of the renaissance that’s happening in that country.” Anderson started her UC San Diego career as a chemistry major—and a shy student. She joined the Track and Field team and started tutoring and mentoring fellow students at the Office of Academic Support and Instructional Services (OASIS),

experiences that helped her build confidence and leadership skills, as well as discover her love of teaching.

In the OASIS staff, particularly her supervisor Cecilia Ubilla, Anderson found her own mentors and inspiration for pursuing a career in education. “She’s the kind of educator that I want to be,” Anderson said, noting that Ubilla is tough but caring teacher who goes above and beyond to help her students. In the department of literature as well, Anderson found mentors who helped guide her on her path and prepare her for life after graduation. “I was a little nervous upon switching majors. I felt that the campus was focused on sciences and there was a stigma around humanity majors, especially literature majors,” she said. “But the literature faculty here are excellent, the students work really hard and the department does a lot to prepare us for success in the workforce. I’ve had the opportunity and the support to carve out my own way.”



Justin Lee

School of International Relations and Pacific Studies Graduate Justin Lee Dedicated to Protecting Human Rights and Fair Labor Practices

After serving as a volunteer in the Dominican Republic with the U.S. Peace Corps, **Justin Lee** came to IR/PS to concentrate on International Management and Corporate Social Responsibility.

He served as director of Strategic Community Consulting, president of Net Impact, and worked for two sustainability consulting firms while a student at IR/PS. After graduation, Lee will be working for UL (Underwriter’s Laboratories) in Los Angeles, which provides social auditing and advisory services to major companies worldwide in order to protect human rights and fair labor practices within their global supply chains.

“Oh, and fun fact and BIG part of my IR/PS experience: I proposed to my girlfriend on campus over the summer,” Lee said. “She said, “yes,” obviously!”

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