

By Erika Johnson Dec 03, 2015



Local black community college students were invited to UC San Diego where they toured the campus, sat in on a class, learned about campus culture and more at the inaugural UMOJA First Look event. Photos by Erika Johnson/University Communications

Local Black Community College Students Get a First Look at UC San Diego

Aaron Harvey, a first-year student at San Diego City College, would like to become a public policy attorney to advocate for those who are unfairly criminalized. He was among more than 20 students who took part in a new daylong program Nov. 19 designed to encourage local black community college students to see themselves at UC San Diego. Participants paired up with current UC San Diego students to attend a class, learn about campus culture and gain information about admissions and financial aid.

"It is encouraging to see people of color in these institutions of higher learning," said Harvey. "I met a brother today, 23 years old, who is in a graduate program. Coming from Southeast San Diego, that's unheard of. You think people like that in those positions—who look like us—is impossible. So when

you see that we are actually in these spaces and excelling in these spaces, it encourages you and others to do that and even more. It really raises the bar."

The inaugural UMOJA First Look event was hosted by the UC San Diego Black Resource Center in partnership with the UC San Diego Office of Admissions and Relations with Schools and UMOJA Community, a state-wide resource program dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of California community college students.

"Our mission is to send a message of access throughout the San Diego community," said Stacia Smith Solomon, director of the UC San Diego Black Resource Center. "Hosting a program like this hopefully communicates to the participants that we want them here. A large percentage of incoming black students come from Los Angeles and the Bay area. We would like to reach local students as well to let them know of the opportunities right in their backyard, that UC San Diego is a great place for them to finish their undergraduate and graduate degrees."



UC San Diego Assistant Vice Chancellor of Admissions Mae Brown.

undergraduate degree. A first-year San Diego City College student, she plans on studying biology and pursuing a medical degree.

"I decided I wanted to come here today," said Tucker. "The presence of the black community, even though it's small, it's strong. It just pulls me in. Everybody is so friendly and family-like."

Community college students also had the chance to learn about transfer admission eligibility and financial aid options. During a luncheon, students heard remarks from Assistant Vice Chancellor of Admissions Mae Brown and Glynda Davis, Senior Diversity Officer with UC San Diego's Office for



The event included a resource fair, where potential transfers could learn about living on campus, career services, study abroad, Campus Community Centers and more.

The UMOJA First Look program provided an opportunity for potential transfers from San Diego Mesa College and San Diego City College to connect with nearly 30 current students and even attend one of their class sessions. Others had the option of taking a guided tour of the campus. All participants were also able to speak to representatives from numerous campus departments about living on campus, career services, study abroad, campus community centers and more.

It was Alejandra Tucker's first time visiting the campus, yet the experience was enough for her to decide that UC San Diego is where she would like to complete her

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, who reiterated that staff are committed to supporting their transition from community college to the four-year campus experience.

The event concluded with a panel of UC San Diego students who shared their experiences on campus as black transfer students. One of the panelists, Angela Webb-Pigg, revealed she had never considered the possibility of attending a University of California campus or thought about the prospect of graduate school until she attended an orientation event at UC San Diego. She transferred in 2014 and is now a Student Success Leader at the UC San Diego Black Resource Center, where she has started Triton Transfer Tuesdays to help new transfer students learn about resources and connect with peers.

"I didn't realize how much the University of California had to offer me until I came here to see for myself," said Webb-Pigg. "These types of events are necessary for transfer students to discover their options and form connections. Already there is relationship building among participants. Now UC San Diego is a familiar place for them."

The UMOJA First Look event supports UC San Diego's larger mission to promote access and increase educational opportunities for all students in San Diego County. Throughout the year, the [Black Resource Center](#), in coordination with all [Campus Community Centers](#), holds events and programs to cultivate community, promote scholarship, encourage retention, foster leadership and promote professional development while exploring issues surrounding social justice.



A panel of four current UC San Diego transfer students shared their experiences on campus.

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