

By Christine Clark Jan 23, 2014

Growing Number of Gates Scholars Shine at UC San Diego

Recipients awarded more than \$7.8 million in scholarships since program's inception in 2000

Angelica Gutierrez

To many people, Angelica Gutierrez is an inspiration. The Palm Springs native is majoring in political science at UC San Diego and balances her busy study schedule with working as a peer educator and giving back to her community. But to Gutierrez, it's her parents that are her true inspiration.



gutierrez

“My father never had a school education because he grew up poor in a small ranch in Jalisco, Mexico, but that never stopped him from learning and becoming the great and hardworking man he is today,” Gutierrez said.

She added, “My mother studied up to middle school and was forced to drop out to help and take care of her siblings. But, like my dad, my mother kept moving on and is a hardworking and strong woman.”

Gutierrez, a sophomore, is one of UC San Diego's 68 recipients of the Gates Millennium Scholarships. The program annually awards “good through graduation” scholarships to talented students nationwide. The scholarships were established by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to provide support for ethnically underrepresented groups who are at a significant economic disadvantage and have high academic and leadership promise and a demonstrated dedication to community service.

Since the program's inception in 2000, UC San Diego has seen a steady rise in enrollment of Gates Millennium Scholars and the campus been awarded a total \$7,850,625 in scholarship funds from the program. The average annual award to individual students was \$12,227 between the 2001 to 2012 academic years. Many Gates Scholars also receive other financial aid awards in addition to Gates funds.

Each year, the scholarships go to 1,000 talented students nationwide for use at any college or university of their choice from undergraduate through graduate school.

“It’s an honor to have more and more of these exemplary students choose to attend UC San Diego,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “The Gates Millennium Scholarship demonstrates how education empowers students and is one of the biggest enablers for upward social mobility.”

According to Mireya Saldaña, a campus engagement manager with the Gates Millennium Scholars program, UC San Diego has been an excellent partner in supporting its student scholars.

“UC San Diego staff, faculty and leadership have been tremendous advocates and allies in the success and persistence of our scholars through access to academic support, enrichment programs and leadership opportunities,” Saldaña said. “Our scholars feel supported, engaged and connected to the UC San Diego campus.”

According to Ann Klein, director of financial aid at UC San Diego, Gates Millennium Scholars tend to be very service oriented.

“The Gates Millennium Scholars I have met over the years are very passionate students with a dedication to both succeeding academically and giving back to their communities,” Klein said.

Dalia Valladares

This is certainly the case, for Gates Millennium Scholar Dalia Valladares, a freshman biology major at UC San Diego.

“The Gates Millennium Scholarship has inspired me to grow more as a student,” said Valladares, who grew up in south central Los Angeles. “I want to continue to shape my own success to then come back to my community and help young students learn to shape their own aspirations and dreams.”

Valladares said that although she came from a low economic background, she was able to overcome obstacles and seize many opportunities. “For most of my life, I have resided in unsafe neighborhoods,” she said. “But despite this, I was able to grow both socially and academically by being involved in sports since the age of 9, volunteering at local churches, clinics and health centers, supporting fundraisers, offering services to charities, participating in internships and research programs—all of which helped me become the person that I am today.”

After Valladares graduates from UC San Diego, she plans on attending medical school.



Dalia Valladares

She added, “I have learned I was able to accomplish so much because of the positive influences and opportunities I received. I hope to present similar opportunities for others to benefit from.”

Huandari Lopez

Huandari Lopez, a freshman computer science major, also said being Gates Millennium Scholar has inspired him to give back to his community and set an example for his peers.

“Everyone deserves an equal shot of making their dreams come true, and money should be not be a factor,” Lopez said. “I want to inspire my community and other communities as well to strive to do their best.”

Lopez said he is immensely grateful for the opportunities provided by the Gates Millennium Scholarship and also credits much of his success to the work ethic he learned from his parents.

“Because my parents never had a college degree, let alone high school degree, they often had to work two jobs in order to keep our heads above water, and without them and their support I would not be here.”



Lopez

He added that another benefit of the Gates Millennium Scholarship is that the program has also enabled him to make great friends with other scholars on campus.

Lopez and other scholars often participate in activities together including outreach events throughout the San Diego community. The scholars aim to deliver the message to younger students that college is within reach and that a UC San Diego education is affordable and accessible.

Saldaña said the outreach efforts of UC San Diego have increased the college-going culture of low-income communities throughout the San Diego region.

In addition to offering strong support to the Gates Millennium Scholarship Program, UC San Diego has increased its efforts to expand its access to students from diverse backgrounds, including through such initiatives such as the [Chancellor’s Associates Scholars Program](#). The scholarship covers college costs including books, transportation and living expenses—essentially providing a full ride—to awardees from three local high schools that work with historically underserved communities: Gompers Preparatory Academy, Lincoln High School and The Preuss School UCSD.

In addition, UC San Diego will re-launch its [UniversityLink](#) program for fall 2015 enrollment. The program will enable low-income, high-achieving regional community college students to have a pathway of guaranteed admission to UC San Diego.

UC San Diego has been ranked as the top university in the nation for the fourth consecutive year by Washington Monthly, based on three criteria: social mobility, research and civic engagement. The campus earned especially high marks in the social mobility category for the number of UC San Diego students who receive federal Pell Grants (need-based grants to low-income students) and their graduation rates.

For more information on UC San Diego's Gates Millennium Scholars, go to gmsa.ucsd.edu/about.

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