

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

By Anthony King

Nov 09, 2017



From left, Tom Seidler of the San Diego Padres, Ambassador Marcela Celorio and Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies director Rafael Fernandez de Castro with Paola Avila of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce Oct. 25. (Photos by Melissa Jacobs/ San Diego Regional Chamber)

UC San Diego Honored for Cross-Border Commitment

For leadership that fosters opportunity and cross-cultural collaboration, the University of California San Diego has received the Cross-Border Collaboration Award from the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber honored the university at a tribute dinner Oct. 25. in part for its open dialogue, multiple exchange programs and development of resources that help increase student access and success. Research initiatives led by the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies and Jacobs School of Engineering were highlighted.

“UC San Diego has a long history of impact in the cross-border region, demonstrating leadership in promoting and enhancing bi-national educational, research and industry partnerships,” said UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “We look at our collaboration with the broader San Diego-Tijuana community as a way to support our growing student population and encourage their excellence in all fields, from engineering to the arts and humanities.”

More than 200 business, government and community leaders from the region attended the chamber’s International Tribute Dinner, including San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer and Tijuana Mayor Juan Manuel Gastelum. They discussed the role the two cities play in preserving and promoting the region’s economic and cultural ties.

Receiving the Cross-Border Collaboration Award on behalf of UC San Diego that evening was Rafael Fernandez de Castro, director of the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the School of Global Policy and Strategy.

“Southern California concentrates the largest amount of Mexican peoples, and Northern California concentrates the largest amount of American-born who have returned to Mexico. There are literally thousands of students that we share,” Fernandez de Castro said. “These students feel binational, and they are bicultural. If we educate and serve this community well, they will be the labor force needed for the advanced region we have become, and we expect to be.”



Rafael Fernandez de Castro (right) accepts the Cross-Border Collaboration Award from JC Thomas of Semptra International.

Offered since 2004, the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies-led [Mexico Migration Field Research Project](#) is a three-part course offering students hands-on field research experience focused on international migration. Findings from the 2015 – 2016 research offered insight into the educational trajectories and professional aspirations of youth in the California-Baja region, helping inform policy solutions to respond to the specific needs of the shared student-population.

“The more we strengthen collaborations between the U.S. and Mexico, the more we can improve the lives of citizens in both countries,” Fernandez de Castro said.

Among the many innovative, cross-border initiatives at UC San Diego, highlights include:

- The [CaliBaja Education Consortium](#), launched at the UC San Diego Cross-Border Innovation Summit in June 2017, is a collaboration between UC San Diego and 13 Baja California institutions that allows for students to conduct research and take classes on both sides of the border.
- Based at the Jacobs School of Engineering, the [CaliBaja Center for Resilient Materials](#) and Systems is directed by Department of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering professor Olivia Graeve and

brings together cross-border researchers to create materials that withstand extreme environments.

- Also established by Graeve, the [ENLACE](#) bi-national summer research program sees youth from San Diego County and Baja California spend seven weeks doing research on campus. Now in its fifth year, this summer's ENLACE group included 110 students.
- The [Health Frontiers in Tijuana Student-run Free Clinic](#) provides health care for medically underserved in Tijuana, overseen by UC San Diego School of Medicine and Universidad Autonoma de Baja California School of Medicine.
- The [Mexico Studies Chair at UC San Diego](#), a Fulbright-Garcia Robles scholarship, has been established at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies.
- The [UCSD Cross-Border Initiative](#) was established in 2012 to promote interdisciplinary poverty research and practice in the San Diego-Tijuana border region and includes the [Blum Summer Field Internship](#).
- The forthcoming "It's About Time" festival, curated by [Department of Music](#) professor Steven Schick, celebrates regional arts and culture with San Diego and Tijuana institutions at multiple cross-border locations.

In addition to UC San Diego, the chamber honored Ambassador Marcela Celorio, Mexico's Consul General in San Diego, as Leader of the Year for her advocacy supporting the United States-Mexico relationship, and the San Diego Padres as Binational Business of the Year for their investment in both the community and region's youth.

"We here in the Cali-Baja region are an example to the rest of the country and the Chamber is proud to honor those who are committed to enhancing our region's position in the global economy and helping Cali-Baja reach its greatest potential," said Jerry Sanders, president and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber.

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