



Town & Gown scholarship recipient Ruben Castro credits the organization with helping him get into medical school.

Town & Gown UC San Diego Hits \$1 Million Milestone for its 10th Anniversary

Support group raises scholarship funds by connecting the community with the campus

“When I graduated from high school, I didn’t know what to do,” says UC San Diego alumnus Ruben Castro. “My dad had left when I was young, so I didn’t have a mentor growing up. I joined the Navy to help my mom with the bills, and after boot camp, I was sent to Iraq for seven months.”

Castro served in the U.S. Navy for five years, where his experiences included being deployed on a ship off Somalia overtaking pirates, providing humanitarian help in Pakistan after a flood, training Saudis to treat combat wounds, and being stationed in the emergency room at the Balboa Naval Medical Center in San Diego. “The military gave me a ton of experience and exposed me to different areas of medicine,” he said, “so I started thinking this is something I want to do.”

He applied to UC San Diego and graduated in 2014 with a degree in neuroscience. Today, Castro is in medical school at UCLA, deciding whether his specialty will be as a neurologist or a neurosurgeon. He credits the Town & Gown Scholarship he received his senior year at UC San Diego for giving him the breathing room to study and pass the rigorous entrance exams for medical school.

Founded in 2007 as a UC San Diego support group, Town & Gown sponsors lively monthly luncheon programs addressing the most interesting issues of our times, featuring UC San Diego professors and researchers, as well as luminaries from other organizations. Student scholars also stand up and tell their remarkable stories.

Town & Gown scholarships recognize and reward students with high academic achievement and strong records of community service, whose goals include continuing service. The students must also display financial need. These are one-year, one-time awards that may range from \$2,000 to \$5,000. Student applications are reviewed by the scholarship committee, and finalists are interviewed in person.

Castro's motivation and drive are qualities shared by other students who not only received a Town & Gown Scholarship, but also earned the profound admiration of the members of this support group. These young achievers have overcome obstacles ranging from homelessness to religious asylum, from parental substance abuse and neglect to assuming the care of siblings at a young age. Setting their sights high, they've earned a place at UC San Diego, and that's no easy feat.

In its first year, the organization awarded one scholarship. This year, 14 students received a Town & Gown Scholarship, bringing the total to 66 and on track to award at least 14 more next fall. Over the years, the students' stories have deeply touched Town & Gown members, so for its 10th anniversary year of "friends, faculty and philanthropy," the organization set a goal of reaching the cumulative \$1 million mark in scholarship donations. Generous members stepped up and pushed past that goal in February.



UC San Diego's Larry Smarr, director of the Qualcomm Institute on campus, was a recent luncheon speaker. Photo by Erika Johnson/UC San Diego University Communications.



Town & Gown has grown to nearly 260 members who support UC San Diego. Photo by Erika Johnson/UC San Diego University Communications.

Connecting community with academia – town with gown

Ten years ago, a handful of service-minded women sat down with their address books and fleshed out the idea of bringing involved, philanthropic people together to form an organization that would link members of the community (town) with the intellectual capital of the UC San Diego faculty (gown), while supporting students. The idea had been introduced by the group's leader, Lucy Haugh, a former first lady of the University of Southern California. USC's Town & Gown members have been supporting their campus since 1904.

In 2006, Haugh approached UC San Diego's Chancellor Marye Anne Fox with her vision of forming such an organization. The mission: to integrate and engage residents of the region in the life of UC San Diego, to develop informed members to strengthen the university as its advocates, and to support the university through student scholarships. The chancellor gave the green light, and during her tenure was a regular attendee at monthly luncheon/lectures.

From that small group of founders and their contacts, Town & Gown has grown to nearly 260 members through word of mouth. New members are sponsored by existing members. All are assessed an annual fee of \$175 (with a portion going toward scholarships), and pay for each luncheon they attend; additional scholarship donations are optional and appreciated.

"Lucy didn't just have a vision for UC San Diego," says Town & Gown President Sue Kalish. "She backed it with her time, her dedication and her wide circle of friends. Town & Gown has introduced the university to people who'd never been involved with the campus before—people who didn't know the level of the work the faculty does here, or the caliber of the students."

Kalish added, "We're proud we've reached 10 years and passed \$1 million, and proud that we've touched the lives of 66 students so far. They've touched us, too, and we love how we've grown and learned so much with our friends."



President Sue Kalish enjoys a lively Town & Gown lunch conversation. Photo by Erika Johnson/UC San Diego University Communications.

Town & Gown donations have created both current-year scholarships and endowments that will fund future scholars. For Town & Gown membership information, please email

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To read more student stories, visit the [Town & Gown website](http://www.townandgown.ucsd.edu).

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