

UC San Diego's Stellar Students from the Class of 2016

The second installment of this year's list of outstanding grads

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Student Advocate Graduates from UC San Diego after Three Years of College

At age 21, Heidi Martinez is graduating from UC San Diego with a degree in political science, after just three years of college. Martinez enrolled in community college at age 18 and transferred to UC San Diego one year later. Once on campus, Martinez immersed herself in student life through the All-Campus Transfer Association (ACTA). "I became engulfed in a world of advocacy and passion for transfer students," she said. "I made not only many friends, but also a family." Since spring of last year, Martinez served as president for ACTA. She also served as a resident advisor at the Village in Torrey Pines, UC San Diego's transfer student housing community. This past fall, she interned for Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez (D-80) and also held an internship with a nonprofit founded by one of her political science professors, former State Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher, UC San Diego's first "Professor of Practice." The Three Wise Men Foundation advocates for the rights of veterans. "Both opportunities made me grow as a person and have given me valuable experience," Martinez said. Martinez draws much of her inspiration from her mother, who worked as a cook and cleaned offices to support her daughter. "I was raised by a hard-working mother who has never missed a day of work in her life. She has given me all the tools for a successful life; without her, I would be nowhere. She worked hard so that I could go to school and obtain an education," Martinez said. Born in Mexico, Martinez said her family came to the U.S. illegally so that she could have a better life. She was an undocumented student until her 19th birthday when the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was introduced into law in California, which allowed her to legally work and study in the U.S. "I worked two jobs through community college and took six or seven classes each semester to be able to finish in one year and transfer to UC San Diego," Martinez said. "They call DACA recipients dreamers, and I do believe that I am a dreamer." Her plans after graduation are to



Heidi Martinez

continue advocating for transfer students and minorities through volunteer work and internships. Her ultimate goal is to work at UC San Diego's office for student affairs. "I want to work with students, some of whom may have in a situation similar to mine, and show them how they can persevere."

First Generation Graduate Aims to Improve Strategies for Teaching Developmental Math

Tracey Kiser is graduating with a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Teaching and Learning. The only person in her family to graduate from college, Kiser is dedicated to closing the academic achievement gap for low-income students. "I am a living testimony for students who come from low-income families and neighborhoods infested with gangs drugs and violence," she said. "I want to show students that they can also change their situation and achieve their dreams." Kiser has taught high school math for nine years, but it was teaching at a community college class that inspired her doctoral research. She realized she was teaching the same content in the college remedial math class that she taught in her high school classroom, and wondered why some of her college students were struggling. Math is a predictor of college success, she explained, so helping students succeed in this area is critical. For her dissertation, Kiser focused on understanding student learning needs and how instructional practices address those needs. "The voices of students who are unsuccessful in developmental mathematics and faculty who are teaching developmental mathematics are needed to help build teaching and learning strategies that will maximize students learning needs, skills, equal access and student success," she said. After graduating, Kiser plans to transition from teaching high school to becoming a professor at a community college or university.



Tracey Kiser

Returning Student Champions Intergenerational Dialogue and Community

Thurgood Marshall College student Karyn Speidel is graduating with a bachelor's degree in Public Health. A returning student who has raised an adult son, Speidel is passionate about strengthening community through intergenerational dialogue. She completed her education while living with a chronic illness, a rare inner ear disorder called Meniere's disease that causes unilateral deafness, unexpected bouts of vertigo, imbalance and visual challenges. While an undergraduate, Speidel wanted an opportunity to continue discussing lecture topics with others—but not just other students. She found classmates who shared her interest in promoting dialogue and formed two new intergenerational programs—a roundtable discussion group and a walking club—to bring together students, faculty, staff and the local retirement community. "The response has been overwhelmingly positive and so heartwarming for all generations," said Speidel. "There is a large body of research demonstrating that when multiple generations participate in dialogue, it provides an opportunity to discover cross-generational values, which can shift cultural

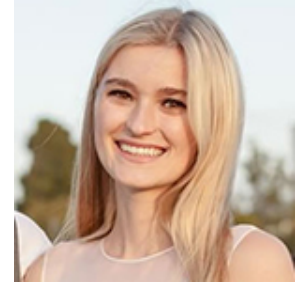


Karyn Speidel

perspectives and expand participation on complex issues.” Working with students, faculty and administrators, Speidel built upon the initial success of these programs and launched the Intergenerational Collaboration Initiative. Next, she plans to pursue a career that combines her public health education and experience fostering dialogue. “I plan to do my best to create the healthiest communities we can possibly have.”

Marshall College Student Leader to Continue as UC San Diego Medical Student

Throughout her four years at Marshall College, Kathleen Maguire committed much of her time to welcoming new students to ensure that freshmen found their niche on campus and meeting with students across the UC system to address issues affecting undergraduates. A passionate student advocate since her first quarter at UC San Diego, Maguire served many leadership roles—from Marshall College Student Council chair to an orientation leader and a delegate for the University of California Student Association Congress. Maguire earned a Bachelor of Science in biology and a minor in history. In the fall, she will begin her post-graduate studies at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. Her goal is to inspire patients to make positive changes in their lives and recognize the relationship between physical and mental health. By explaining the science behind treatments, she hopes to help lay the path to wellness for patients and caregivers. In particular, Maguire aspires to be a pediatrician, helping children develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime. “While parents and guardians play the largest role in shaping the habits of children, I believe doctors also play an important part,” she says. “Pediatricians have an opportunity to help young patients learn how to be strong stewards of their own health from an early age.”



Kathleen Maguire

School of Global Policy and Strategy Grad and Cuban Native Aims to Boost International Business

The journey to becoming a graduate student in the United States was full of challenges for Cuban native Marla Recio Carbajal, who graduated with a master’s degree from the School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS). “I was fortunate to link up with the visionary and forward-thinking admissions department at GPS,” said Recio Carbajal, whose studies focused on international management and Latin America. “Through their creativity and hard work, we were able to overcome all of the challenges and I became the first Cuban international student at UC San Diego. I will be forever grateful.” For the past two years, Recio Carbajal has been instrumental in planning an annual spring break trip to Cuba where GPS students learn firsthand about culture, entrepreneurship and technology. The most recent trip coincided with the historic visit of President Barack Obama, the first official visit of a sitting U.S President in nearly nine decades. Recio Carbajal is interested in helping the Cuban private sector grow, as well as enhancing international



Marla Recio Carbajal

business and tourism opportunities between Cuba and the U.S. Last summer, she worked with the Institute of the Americas at UC San Diego to organize a training program for Cuban entrepreneurs. She would like to initiate similar programs to promote sustainable business development, in addition to running her own event planning company in Cuba.

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