

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

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Sally Ride Science Launches at UC San Diego



Sally Ride was the first American woman in space. Photo by NASA

STEM outreach program to continue legacy of first American woman to fly in space

Blasting aboard space shuttle *Challenger* in 1983 to become the first American woman—and at age 32, the youngest American in space—the late Sally Ride captured the nation’s imagination by breaking barriers. Her legacy also includes inspiring generations of students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) through Sally Ride Science, a science education company she co-founded in 2001.

In a partnership agreement announced by the University of California, San Diego, future generations—especially girls and historically underrepresented K-12 students—will be motivated to continue with STEM in school and beyond through Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego. The newly created program aligns with the university’s Strategic Plan to expand existing initiatives and implement new approaches that result in accessible and affordable learning for all. The agreement was effective Oct. 1.

Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego will focus on the following target areas: professional development for teachers; K-12 STEM + Arts (STEAM) education including courses, lectures and events; and online programming via UCTV. The program will be implemented through the university’s Extension, Supercomputer Center and Scripps Institution of Oceanography. These divisions will collaborate to provide the expertise, resources, leadership, support and oversight for Sally Ride Science based on the program’s guiding principles. Two of the Sally Ride Science cofounders, Tam O’Shaughnessy and Karen Flammer, will be part of the new program, providing continuity for Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego.

“Sally Ride was recognized throughout the world as a physicist, astronaut, professor and science education advocate,” said UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “We are honored to carry on her dream of Sally Ride Science to inspire future generations of students to get excited about STEM fields.”

In 1977, Ride was finishing her Ph.D. in physics at Stanford when she saw an article in the student newspaper saying that NASA was looking for astronauts—and for the first time was allowing women to apply. Ride was among the first six women chosen to join the astronaut corps. When the space shuttle Challenger blasted off from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, on June 18, 1983, she soared into history as the first American woman in space. She flew a second time aboard Challenger in 1984 and later became the only person to serve on the presidential commissions investigating both of the nation’s space shuttle tragedies.



Research physicist Karen Flammer will serve as director of education for Sally Ride Science.



At the Sally Ride Research Vessel christening in Anacortes, WA were (left to right) Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla; Tam O'Shaughnessy, cofounder and current CEO of Sally Ride Science; Margaret Leinen, Vice Chancellor for Marine Sciences; and Walter Munk, renowned Scripps Institution of Oceanography scientist.

After retiring from NASA, she joined the faculty at UC San Diego in 1989 as professor of physics and director of the California Space Institute, an initiative under the University of California system. She cofounded Sally Ride Science in 2001 and served as CEO of the company until her death from pancreatic cancer in 2012 at age 61.

“We are thrilled to extend the wonderful legacy of Sally Ride—astronaut, scientist and UC San Diego professor emeritus of physics,” said Becky Petitt, vice chancellor for

the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. “Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego also ties into our continuing work to diversify the STEM pipeline. By this agreement, our campus will be able to expand Sally Ride Science to even more students—including traditionally underrepresented and underserved populations.”

The cofounder and current CEO of Sally Ride Science, Tam O'Shaughnessy, will serve as executive director of Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego. Before becoming CEO, she served as chief creative officer of Sally Ride Science from 2001 to 2012, overseeing all content development, and as chief operating officer from 2009 to 2013. After earning a bachelor's and a master's degree in biology from Georgia State University, she received her doctorate in school psychology from UC Riverside in 1997. O'Shaughnessy is an associate professor emeritus of school psychology at San Diego State University.

O'Shaughnessy said, “It has been a great pleasure to work with Chancellor Khosla and his team to find a way to bring Sally Ride Science onto the UC San Diego campus. This is a golden opportunity to continue our mission of bringing science to life for generations to come.”

Karen Flammer, a UC San Diego research physicist who is also a cofounder of Sally Ride Science, will serve as director of education for Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego. Flammer also has been named director of education, outreach and training at the San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC). She holds the two positions through a joint appointment with SDSC and the UC San Diego Extension.

Flammer has more than 20 years of experience directing large-scale STEM outreach and professional development programs. She served as Sally Ride Science's head of professional development as well as principal investigator for Sally Ride EarthKAM, a NASA program that allows students around the world to capture images of Earth using a camera on the International Space Station. Flammer earned her doctorate in space physics from UC San Diego in 1988.

UC San Diego Extension will play a key role in the implementation of Sally Ride Science. The division is already involved in extensive efforts to reach out to youth in underserved communities, including our region's tribal youth, Southeast San Diego and Barrio Logan. Extension also has a special focus in bringing women into STEM/STEAM careers. The division will bring together both of those efforts through programming that honors Sally Ride with the Sally Ride UCTV series on The STEAM channel as well as through outreach to teachers.



Sally Ride was a member of the President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology. Photo credit: Whitehouse.gov

“Sally Ride Science will augment and expand UC San Diego's expertise in K-12 outreach and science with a unique program to inspire teachers, students and the next generation of learners,” added Edward Abeyta, “Sally Ride Science will increase our reach in the community and online, offering up a rich clearinghouse of science, technology, engineering, math and arts resources. In addition, we will be able to provide additional educational access to key target groups, including girls, at-risk youth and first generation students.”

In a stroke of serendipity, Scripps Institution of Oceanography will take delivery in 2016 of America's newest oceanographic research vessel: *R/V Sally Ride*. Under construction now by the U.S. Navy, the ship was christened *Sally Ride* by Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus in honor of Sally Ride's remarkable legacy of scientific accomplishment, technical achievement, space exploration and commitment to science education. The state-of-the-art ship will use powerful sensors to conduct multidisciplinary scientific research worldwide, from coastlines to continental shelves to the deepest trenches, and will investigate the workings within, upon and above Earth's oceans. Using satellite telepresence, students and teachers will experience ocean exploration while interacting with scientists at sea. *R/V Sally Ride* will provide an exciting new venue for Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego to demonstrate to students that STEM fields are meaningful, satisfying and accessible for everyone.

The campus expects to offer Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego STEM programs and activities for K-12 students beginning in winter 2016.