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20th Annual Diversity Awards Honor Commitment to Outreach, Inclusion and Community Building

Twice a week during lunch, a group of UC San Diego undergraduate and graduate students lead English language workshops with Spanish-speaking maintenance and janitorial staff at the Raza Resource Centro. More than tutors and as close as family, UC San Diego Student Worker Collective volunteer members take the time not only to instruct but also directly connect on a personal level with each staff member, building a network of access and a community of support.

The Student Worker Collective was among 20 individuals and departments recognized for outstanding contributions in support of UC San Diego's commitment to diversity. Recipients were honored at the 20th annual Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action and Diversity Awards ceremony Feb.



From left, Gerardo Arellano, Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla, Alina Méndez

24 at the Price Center.

“Diversity is not the responsibility of one person—each of us has an obligation to make sure that UC San Diego is completely inclusive, where we treat everybody with respect,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “We are proud to honor our faculty, staff and students who have made an important impact on the campus and our diversity efforts.”

The Student Worker Collective strives to address worker

rights by equipping UC San Diego service staff with the language skills they need to effectively communicate with supervisors, staff and students on a daily basis. The free one-hour workshops held five weeks out of the quarter include instruction in conversational speaking, writing, grammar and reading skills and are conducted based on participants’ proficiency level.

“As a daughter of Mexican immigrants, I have witnessed the difficulties that come with having limited English skills. My parents never

learned English because they worked in agriculture and have always lived in Spanish-speaking

2014 Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action and Diversity Awardees:

Executive Vice Chancellor and Vice Chancellor Recipients:

- Brian G. Keating, Ph.D. - Academic Affairs
- Alumni and Community Engagement - Advancement
- Shaun R. Travers, Ph.D. - Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Scott R. Vandenberg, M.D. Ph.D. - Health Sciences
- Jane L. Teranes, Ph.D. - Marine Sciences
- Michael L. Norman, Ph.D. - Research
- Debbie Centeno - Resource Management and Planning
- Gary Ratcliff, Ph.D. - Student Affairs
- Thomas Collins - UC San Diego Health System
- Mark Cunningham – Vice Chancellor/Chief Financial Officer

University-Wide Individual Recipients:

- Tamika A. Franklin
- Olivia A. Graeve, Ph.D.
- Colin King
- Mark A. Lawson, Ph.D.
- Robert S. Pomeroy, Ph.D.
- Adele Savage
- Hilda Graciela Uriarte
- Susan S. Yonezawa, Ph.D.

University-Wide Department Recipients:

- CREATE STEM Success Initiative Team
- Student Worker Collective

communities,” said Alina Méndez, a graduate student at UC San Diego and member of the Student Worker Collective. “When I help workers communicate better with people in and outside of campus, I feel an enormous reward thinking that they will not suffer the same invisibility and hardships that my own parents have faced.”

Many of the student volunteers describe the program as a mutually beneficial learning opportunity, a chance to gain practical teaching experience while connecting with the staff community in solidarity. “Engaging directly with workers, who are largely Latina women, has allowed me to feel a sense of support,” said Alexis Meza, a UC San Diego graduate student and member of the Student Worker Collective. “These workers remind me, and many members, of our parents and families. Their kind words of encouragement serve a great purpose for many of us who are far from home and do not get to see our families as consistently.”

Also working to connect the Triton family in meaningful ways, Diversity Award recipient Tamika Franklin encourages alumni to become leaders and guiding lights for the next generation of students at UC San Diego. As Director of Alumni Relations for Physical Sciences, Franklin is also an advisor for alumni councils that cultivate active participation among diverse alumni, including the UC San Diego Black Alumni Council and UC San Diego Asian/Pacific-Islander Alumni Council.

“One of the great things about working at an institution like UC San Diego is that you get to be involved in a variety of opportunities to serve, mentor and give back to the campus,” said Franklin. “My job is to empower volunteers to get involved—I am the person behind the scenes helping someone to fulfill a dream or encouraging someone to give back or create a scholarship.”

In the Division of Physical Sciences, Franklin also helps to link female students with positive alumni role models to help them realize their potential to thrive in a field often dominated by men. She partners with student organizations to help undergraduates discover career options, learn how to overcome obstacles and create a legacy of success among future students.

“I help students connect with female alumni who have successfully navigated the field so that they can network with those who understand their perspective,” said Franklin. “It helps reinforce that they are good enough, that they were recruited for a reason.”

Mark Lawson, another Diversity Award recipient, also helps students realize their potential, particularly underrepresented students who may not have considered graduate school an option. A professor of reproductive medicine and director of student programs at the UC San Diego Center for



From left, Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla, Tamika Franklin

Investigations of Health and Educational Disparities, Lawson takes the time to get to know his mentees' individual aspirations and dreams to better help them achieve their goals.

“Helping students realize their own creative potential and discover in themselves the ability to work at the highest levels of research is very meaningful to me,” said Lawson. “Most of the students I mentor are from backgrounds that have traditionally seen a career in science as something unattainable, or have been discouraged from pursuing it. Changing that perception or limitation is a fundamental motivation.”



From left, Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla, Mark Lawson

A champion in recruitment and retention of underrepresented students, Lawson played an instrumental role in securing funding for UC San Diego to be a major sponsor of SACNAS—Society for Advancement of Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in Science—the largest STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) diversity event in the country. Gaining key support from the Chancellor and Graduate Division, UC San Diego's conference presence multiplied, including increased marketing, signage and booth space as well as the chance for 40 UC San Diego faculty and students to

attend and present research.

“The goal is to demonstrate to program representatives and faculty the rich potential of students of color in STEM and to motivate them to actively recruit this highly talented group of future scientists to our programs,” said Lawson. “This is part of a three-year program to increase interest in, application to and hopefully matriculation into our graduate programs by the best underrepresented minority candidates in the country.”

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