

November 16, 2020 | By Erika Johnson

Nelika-Fai Watson Named Vice Principal of The Preuss School UC San Diego

Nelika-Fai Watson has been appointed as vice principal of The Preuss School UC San Diego, effective Nov. 9, 2020. Most recently, Watson served as the director of Independent Study for two public K-12 charter schools in San Diego County. The Preuss School is a unique charter middle and high school for low-income students who strive to become the first in their families to graduate from college. Located on the UC San Diego campus, The Preuss School is consistently recognized by U.S. News & World Report as the best high school in San Diego County and among the top 10 in California.



Vice Principal Nelika-Fai Watson

Watson is committed to ensuring that students receive a quality education. Under the leadership of Executive Director Helen V. Griffith, Ed.D., Watson will partner with Principal Matthew Steitz, Ed.D., to continue to cultivate scholar success. She holds equity at the center of her work and believes that providing learners with high quality options are integral to ensuring that all students receive the best education possible.

“I am thrilled to join The Preuss School at this unprecedented time in history, and I am excited to utilize these unique challenges to identify opportunities to enrich our scholars’ educational experiences!” said Watson.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in English and Secondary Education from Bowie State University, Watson began her teaching career as a middle school teacher in Baltimore County, Maryland. She later taught first grade in Washington, D.C. and served as Academic Coordinator for a local non-profit organization.

In 2005, Watson joined Girl Scouts of Central Maryland where she developed and implemented programs and curricula and contributed to the nationwide implementation of The New Leadership Experience. She returned to a traditional teaching position in 2008 as a founding faculty member of a 6th-12th grade turnaround school in Baltimore City. Here Watson and her colleagues were instrumental in restoring the relationship between the school and the community at large and elevating student achievement.

After earning the Master's degree in Leadership in Teaching from Notre Dame of Maryland University, Watson was selected as an Education Pioneers Fellow and subsequently served as Assistant Principal in Baltimore City and later as Director of School Strategy and Logistics in Washington, D.C.



*Students are currently participating in distance learning.
Photo by Erik Jepsen, UC San Diego Publications.*

The Preuss School enrolls more than 800 students in grades six through 12 who come from over 40 diverse San Diego communities. The school is dedicated to empowering low-income and first-generation students through an innovative college-bound culture. Students at The Preuss School benefit from longer learning times, which add up to nearly an entire extra year over the course of their middle and high school careers, funded in part by philanthropic support. Courses are also strategically designed to fulfill and exceed University of California admissions requirements. As a

result, over 90% of graduates are accepted to four-year universities, and almost 100% go on to some form of higher education. [Learn more at preuss.ucsd.edu](http://preuss.ucsd.edu).

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