

December 18, 2019 | By Anthony King

UC San Diego, San Diego Community College District Receive Combined \$2.7M from Mellon Foundation

Support will increase undergraduate and graduate student success in the humanities



2019 PATH Summer Academy attendees. (Photo by Patrick Hennessey/ UC San Diego Division of Arts and Humanities)

With support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the University of California San Diego and San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) are building a pipeline of successful undergraduate and graduate students, resulting in a new generation of leaders who will reshape the value and meaning of an education in the humanities in the 21st century.

The two regional institutions received a combined \$2.7 million in grants that will both expand an established, transformational program for transfer students and launch an initiative specific to career training for Ph.D. students — training that addresses a key need in employment after graduation.

“UC San Diego challenges itself to take bold actions that ensure world-class learning is accessible and affordable for all,” said UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “Our long-standing partnership with SDCCD has helped further this goal by providing cost-effective entry

into higher education and excellent training pathways to bachelor's, graduate and post-graduate degrees. The Mellon Foundation grants will expand opportunities for students to improve their futures and the futures of their families.”

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation's largest funder in arts and culture, and humanities in higher education. For the joint proposal, the foundation awarded two separate grants: \$1.5 million to UC San Diego and \$1.2 million to SDCCD, with programming to begin January 2020.

“The San Diego Community College District is grateful to the Mellon Foundation for its continuing investment in this important humanities partnership with UC San Diego,” said SDCCD Chancellor Constance M. Carroll, who serves on the National Council on the Humanities. “The collaborative efforts between the two institutions have already produced great benefits for students and we look forward to the next phase.”

Serving as leads on the development and implementation of the grants are UC San Diego Division of Arts and Humanities Dean Cristina Della Coletta and SDCCD Vice Chancellor of Instructional Services Stephanie Bulger. Della Coletta and Bulger will oversee teams that continue work established in 2016 by similar, three-year grants from the Mellon Foundation. That support helped launch the Preparing Accomplished Transfers to the Humanities, or PATH, program.

Five Key Initiatives

- Establishing an internship program for Ph.D. students
- Increasing student mentoring
- Strengthening faculty connections
- Using digital technology
- Enhancing the successful PATH Summer Academy

engaged students.”



Students, faculty and staff at the first PATH Summer Academy, in 2017. (Photo by Farshid Bazmandegan)

“What has been most dynamic in launching the PATH program has been seeing results for each student involved, from initial mentorship at the community colleges to becoming student leaders in the humanities at UC San Diego,” said Della Coletta, Chancellor’s Associates Chair in Italian Literature at UC San Diego. “I am confident in saying our partnership with SDCCD and support from the Mellon Foundation is immediately helping diverse, intelligent and

The new grants will support five areas: Establishing an Integrated Internship Initiative for Ph.D. students interested in community-college careers, increasing student outreach and retention through mentoring, strengthening faculty connections between the two institutions, using digital technology for collaboration and innovation, and expanding support services in the annual Summer Academy for PATH students.

“We are fortunate to have the commitment of strong faculty who see the value in a humanities education for its own sake as well as developing the next generation of scholars, activists, and professionals who have a grounding in the humanities,” said Bulger, Vice Chancellor of Instructional Services at SDCCD. “What is distinctive about the next phase of PATH is the focus on preparing student transfers to articulate and use their humanities education as leaders and professionals in a variety of fields.”

A look at what’s to come



*Faculty from UC San Diego and SDCCD meet regularly for the program.
(Photo by Farshid Bazmandegan)*

The Integrated Internship Initiative for Ph.D. students addresses the need for trained professionals for all aspects of careers in community colleges. The new program will offer options to interested graduate students at UC San Diego to look toward community colleges as potential employers in multiple areas, from teaching to administration: academic affairs, student affairs and career counseling.

The goal is to position new doctoral graduates for greater career diversity, with a clear emphasis on the public value of the humanities. The students will be supported for one year and gain community college classroom access from established faculty, shadow current administrative staff, and mentor community-college students on a year-long research project.

Since 2016, PATH has been innovative in increasing the pipeline of diverse transfer students in the humanities with a focus on mentoring and career preparation efforts. Initiatives include a mentee program at the community college district, and a peer mentoring program of community college transfers each summer. Utilizing three years of successful PATH “alumni,” these efforts will be increased.

In addition to strengthening faculty connections, the new grant will also support giving students experiences that blend humanities education with 21st century technology, including virtual and augmented reality tools, and digital storytelling. This will foster new skills in research, digital literacy and ethics, collaboration and public engagement, and will achieve greater accessibility of the humanities outside academia.



Students, including Elisa Ady (far left) prepare to present their research at the final PATH Summer Academy day in 2019. (Photo by Patrick Hennessey)

Administrators also look to enhance the successful PATH Summer Academy, which not only provides much-needed academic and career preparation in a residential environment, but also advantages transfer students with eight units of course work offered through UC San Diego Summer Session.

Enhancements will include mental health support and new courses.

Based on assessments of prior years, the Summer Academy is one of the most impactful elements of the PATH program and student transfer from the community college to the university continues to be a primary focus. And with the support they receive through the program, students are thriving.

Elisa Ady participated in the 2019 PATH Summer Academy, transferring to UC San Diego from City College. Now majoring in Literature, Ady said the faculty members, mentors and staff were incredibly invested in her success, and called the program “more of a community than a cohort,” which helped bolster her confidence as a student.

A resounding success

Since the program’s inception, 42 community college students have been closely mentored by SDCCD faculty as they applied to UC San Diego and 81 students transferring to UC San Diego attended the five-week PATH Summer Academy. Two transfer students became McNair Program scholars, one is a Gilder Lehman History Scholar and eight participated in study-abroad programs.

“PATH has allowed this collaboration to create a new narrative in which SDCCD students see a premier local university as an accessible option for transferring to study the humanities. We have bold plans to build on our success and sustain the momentum with this generous support,” Bulger said.

Della Coletta agreed, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between educational institutions in the greater region.

“We know community college transfer students play a unique and valued role at UC San Diego, and partnering with SDCCD in this way brings us closer to actualizing a new future,” she said. “Expanding the program with this support will have tangible benefits, not just for current and future students, but for a region in need of what an education in the humanities brings: creative, critical thinkers and compassionate, empathetic citizens.”



PATH Summer Academy students participate in skills-training workshops at the UC San Diego Career Center. (Photo by Patrick Hennessey)

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant contributes to the [Campaign for UC San Diego](#). Through this university-wide comprehensive fundraising effort concluding in 2022, the university is enhancing student support, ensuring student success, transforming campus, connecting the community and redefining medicine and health care on a global scale.

About UC San Diego

At the University of California San Diego, we embrace a culture of exploration and experimentation. Established in 1960, UC San Diego has been shaped by exceptional scholars who aren't afraid to look deeper, challenge expectations and redefine conventional wisdom. As one of the top 15 research universities in the world, we are driving innovation and change to advance society, propel economic growth and make our world a better place. Learn more at www.ucsd.edu.

About San Diego Community College District

As one of the largest of California's 73 community college districts, the San Diego Community College District serves approximately 100,000 students annually through three two-year colleges and San Diego Continuing Education. The three colleges, San Diego City College, San Diego Mesa College, and San Diego Miramar College, offer associate degrees and certificates in occupational programs that prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and entry-level jobs. Mesa College also offers a bachelor's degree in Health Information Management. Continuing Education offers noncredit adult education at seven campuses throughout San Diego.

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