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UC San Diego Arts and Humanities Recognized for Commitment to Student Success



UC San Diego students during annual Triton Day. Photos by Erika Johnson/University Communications

The Division of Arts and Humanities at the University of California, San Diego will receive nearly \$100,000 in funding during the 2015 – 2016 academic year for two proposals aimed to strengthen student retention and success.

Funding for the proposed programs will go toward making and measuring progress with vulnerable groups of undergraduate students at UC San Diego. These include international, first-generation and lower-

income students whose English writing skills at the college level benefit from rigorous instruction and guided support.

“Seen together, these two awards will allow us to draw students to the rich world of the arts and humanities and inspire them to become the ambassadors and proud custodians of the values of this hospitable and inclusive world,” said Arts and Humanities Dean Cristina Della Coletta, who is completing her first academic year at the university.

The *Embedded Undergraduate Mentors Pilot Program* will emphasize peer-mentoring and targeted peer-advising to support student retention and academic success, plus improve time-to-degree among students. It will be administered through the Basic Writing Program led by Karen Gocsik, director of the Warren College Writing Program and interim director of the Basic Writing Program.

According to Gocsik, trained undergraduate tutors will be placed into basic writing classes with students for whom English is not their primary language.

“Working one-on-one with a mentor will allow our student writers to build on their particular writing strengths and to address their individual writing weaknesses. They will be able to build their skills—and their confidence as writers—much more quickly,” explained Gocsik. In turn, she noted, student-mentors also will improve their skills through the practice of critiquing a peer’s writing.

The *Interact with Undeclared Majors and Undergraduates Subject to Disqualification* proposal seeks to identify students who enter the university as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) students, but realize after a few semesters that STEM may not be a good match for them. This proposal will inform students about alternative fields of study, resources and opportunities in arts and humanities so that they can confidently and timely determine their scholastic and professional interests.

Support for these inventive programs comes from the university’s *Academic Advising Innovation Grant Initiative* through UC San Diego Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. According to Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Juan C. Gonzalez, the grant selection process was competitive and included many strong applications required to outline ways to advance academic advising through innovative systems and services.

Della Coletta explained that when her team began “brainstorming about the value of Arts and Humanities at UC San Diego ... we knew that our students were our primary interlocutors, especially those students who, traditionally, had not had the opportunity to profit from the potential of a fully integrated and holistic education.”

For more information, visit the Division of Arts and Humanities [website](#).

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