

September 10, 2019 | By Erika Johnson

Helen Griffith Named Inaugural Executive Director of The Preuss School UC San Diego



UC San Diego alumna Helen V. Griffith has been appointed inaugural director of The Preuss School UC San Diego. Photo by Erika Johnson/University Communications.

Following a nationwide search, UC San Diego alumna Helen V. Griffith, Ed.D., has been appointed the inaugural executive director of The Preuss School UC San Diego, effective Oct. 7, 2019. Most recently, Griffith was the founding executive director and CEO of e3 Civic High, a public charter high school located in the San Diego Central Public Library, a role which she has held since 2012. 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.

“Helen Griffith’s proven leadership in education and expert knowledge of the San Diego community make her a perfect fit as The Preuss School UC San Diego’s first executive director,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “As a passionate education innovator who has led the launch and successful growth of three K-12 schools in San Diego, she will invigorate opportunity for Preuss students and propel the school’s innovative strategic vision.”

For Griffith, the role is a return to UC San Diego, where she earned her bachelor’s degree in communication in 1981. As executive director of The Preuss School, she will report directly to UC San Diego Executive Vice Chancellor Elizabeth H. Simmons and work closely with Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. She will also collaborate with The Preuss School Board of Directors, Interim Principal Pete Selleck, the chief administrative officer, development officer and the broader school community to develop and implement long-range plans in alignment with the school’s mission and strategic vision. Griffith will also collaborate with stakeholders at

The Preuss School to address the needs and drive the academic success of an outstanding and diverse student body. She will represent and advocate for the school at the local, state, national and international levels.

“It is an honor to join the team of highly talented and skillful educators as they seek to surpass their record of proven results,” said Griffith. “As a life-long educator, my passion for transformational scholar-outcomes will fuel our vision for next-level innovation, creativity and an educational experience that continues to elevate the trajectory for our scholars, our community, and our world. The Preuss School UC San Diego is positioned to revolutionize the face of public education and I’m beyond excited to be part of *The Preuss Promise!*”

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.



Nearly 100% of students from The Preuss School go on to some form of higher education. Photo by Erik Jepsen/Publications.

Griffith has a strong background in leading innovative schools that serve diverse populations in the San Diego region like The Preuss School. She has garnered over 20 years of experience as an educator and principal, specializing in leadership development, school transformation and educational entrepreneurship.

“Dr. Griffith’s record of transformational leadership in K-12 education and her enthusiasm for empowering diverse populations of students to realize their academic dreams make her ideally suited to lead The Preuss School UC San Diego on its continued trajectory of innovation and excellence,” said EVC Simmons. “We look forward to partnering with her in supporting Preuss School students in the years to come.”

Prior to joining e3 Civic High, Griffith served as dean of students at Crawford High School, vice principal at Lincoln High School and founding principal of Millennial Tech Middle School. In all of these roles she developed meaningful external partnerships, cultivated critical philanthropic support, and served as a strong advocate for the schools to the wider community.

In recognition of her transformational work, Griffith has received numerous professional honors, including Outstanding Woman Leader in the field of Education, 79th District, by the California State Assembly in 2018 and Educator of the Year from the California League of Middle Schools in 2010. In addition, she was also invited by Congresswoman Susan Davis to Washington, D.C., to participate in the National Summit on Teacher Diversity sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education in 2016.

After earning a bachelor's degree in communication from UC San Diego, she earned a master's in educational technology and doctorate in educational leadership from San Diego State University. In her free time, Griffith volunteers as a mentor for several programs, including the Alpha Kappa Alpha Youth Leadership Academy and RISE Urban Principal Preparation Program.

MEDIA CONTACT

Erika Johnson, 858-534-9372, erjohnson@ucsd.edu

UC San Diego's [Studio Ten 300](#) offers radio and television connections for media interviews with our faculty, which can be coordinated via studio@ucsd.edu. To connect with a UC San Diego faculty expert on relevant issues and trending news stories, visit <https://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/media-resources/faculty-experts>.