

UC San Diego

# UC San Diego News Center

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## UC San Diego Programs Help to Attract and Retain Diverse Student Body



*UC San Diego's Black Resource Center, Raza Resource Centro, SPACES (Student Promoted Access Center for Education and Service) and IDEA Student Center at the Jacobs School of Engineering partner to host free overnight programs for students during Triton Day, an annual welcome event for all admitted freshmen and their families. Photos by Erik Jepsen/ UC San Diego Publications*

**W**hile he was developing UC San Diego's first strategic plan in 2013, Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla held open forums with campus and community members where they discussed ways to increase campus diversity. A predominant response was the need to attract more first generation and historically underrepresented students. Attendees also discussed ways to improve UC San Diego's academic excellence and student life.

“We know that we want to be a leading university that enriches human life and provides opportunity for all,” Khosla said at the session. “We also want to be a university that maintains access and affordability, and is diverse.”

## **Enhanced opportunities**

Since that dialogue, the campus has spearheaded new and expanded programs to help students from all backgrounds not only have an opportunity to attend UC San Diego, but also thrive once on campus.

A key initiative is the Chancellor’s Associates Scholars program, launched in 2013 to improve the pathway for local qualified students. The program essentially provides a full-ride and loan-free UC San Diego financial aid package to eligible students from several underserved high schools and community colleges in the region, as well as students from federally recognized tribes and those involved with the nonprofit Reality Changers.



UC San Diego received a record 94,200 freshman and transfer applications for fall 2015 and has continued to see an increase in diversity among student applicants. At the freshman level, the campus had a 7.9 percent rise of historically underrepresented students, with the largest increase coming from African-American high school seniors (up 13.5 percent compared to last year), followed by Mexican-American (up 7.1 percent) and Latino (up 7 percent) applicants.

## **Overnight programs**

Once students are admitted, UC San Diego works to ensure that they have a support system and welcoming community throughout their college journey. For those who are the first in their family to attend college or are unfamiliar with university life, getting the chance to spend an extended period on campus before the academic year begins can provide invaluable insight. UC San Diego’s Black Resource Center, Raza Resource Centro, SPACES (Student Promoted Access Center for Education and Service) and IDEA Student Center at the Jacobs School of Engineering partner to host free overnight programs for students during Triton Day, an annual welcome event for all admitted freshmen and their families.



Most overnight program participants live with a host student mentor and are integrated into everyday life on campus, from visiting classes to touring academic departments and interacting with student organizations. The overarching goal of the overnight visits is to help admitted underrepresented students feel welcome, learn more about the campus culture and get acquainted with academic and community support programs.

The experience proved to be the deciding factor in Brayan Campos Cordero’s college selection. For three days in early April, he lived in a campus dorm, learned about financial aid and other resources, and discovered social communities on campus.

“The overnight program completely changed my attitude toward attending an institution for higher education,” said Cordero, who will begin his UC San Diego academic career as a freshman in the fall. “When it comes to feeling comfortable and welcome, the ability to dorm with my host and shadow his day gave me an open-arms vibe from the program. After the second day, my heart was set on UC San Diego. I ended up submitting my Statement of Intent to Register because of the wonderful and positive experience I had.”

Participating in an overnight stay was also a key factor in Dominique Pruitt’s decision to attend UC San Diego. “I loved how the overnight program gave students a choice to pick a track that would be the most fitting for us. I personally chose the Black Student Union track and it was the best decision I could have made. They were very genuine in their welcome and made me feel like I was already a part of the Triton family.” She added, “My mom fell in love with this school as much as I did. The academic programs, the infinite support and the beautiful location all played a part in the best decision of my life—which was choosing UC San Diego!”



## **Student retention**

The retention rate for first-time UC San Diego freshmen continues to remain high at 94 percent. Through recruitment and retention programming, students—especially those who are first generation, low-income or historically underrepresented—are assisted in finding a balance between academic obligations, social engagement and emotional well-being.

Some students have limited knowledge about what college is like and need to be pointed in the right direction, from how to balance school and work to when to begin conducting research. Programming has been developed at UC San Diego to ensure students transition successfully, feel included and continue to make progress in their academic careers.

## Centers for success

The Black Resource Center’s Success Institute, a free one-day program offered each fall to new historically underrepresented students, helps foster a sense of community and increase awareness of key support services. In a similar way, SPACES’ Academic Success Program pairs incoming students with current UC San Diego student mentors from student organizations to help them adjust to university life and succeed academically.



At the Raza Resource Centro, signature academic success programs such as *Avanzando Juntos* and research and conference pipelines are framed around best practices in assisting students with the tools necessary to academically thrive.

Chancellor’s Associates Scholars can look to a full-time program manager for assistance in navigating the university and building a sense of community. Through the IDEA Student Center, students have access to the

Jacobs Undergraduate Mentoring Program, a community of engineering students and alumni who provide support, advice, guidance and experience.

Becky Pettit, vice chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, noted, “This campus is committed to ensuring students of all backgrounds have access to UC San Diego’s top-ranked educational programs, and we are equally committed to ensuring our students’ well-being and academic success. At UC San Diego, our yield and retention programs are designed to create meaningful connections with our students. These very connections allow our students to thrive and meet their educational and professional aspirations.”

