

By Jade Griffin Apr 25, 2019

The Promise of Preuss

Annual benefit features talk by first alumna to return to teach at the school

When Indira Hood-Esparza was admitted to The Preuss School UC San Diego in 2004 as a sixth grader, she was so eager to start wearing her school uniform that she would try it on in secret over the summer, making sure it was ready for the fall.

“Something about that uniform felt sacred and even at that age, I knew it came with a lot of opportunities and responsibilities,” she said.

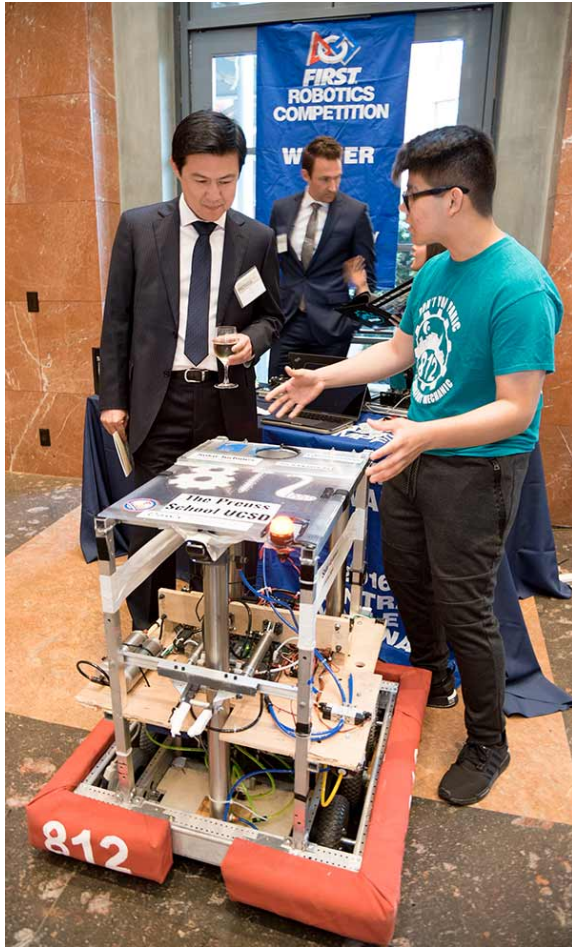
Hood-Esparza is a Preuss School and UC San Diego alumna who shared her story as the keynote speaker at the April 12 Preuss Promise benefit. The annual event raises funds for the charter middle and high school on the UC San Diego campus, which serves low-income students who strive to become the first in their families to graduate from college.



Indira Hood-Esparza spoke at the recent Preuss Promise benefit. She is the first Preuss alum to ever return to teach at the school.

Nearly 200 supporters and friends joined together to celebrate Preuss’ accomplishments and support the school, which was ranked in 2018 as the top high school in San Diego County, and the No. 6 school in the state, by U.S. News and World Report. The event raised more than \$470,000 to support the greatest needs of the school.

Hood-Esparza shared with the crowd that the following week, she would become the first Preuss School alum to ever return to teach at the school. “This is my dream job,” Hood-Esparza told the audience, as she related that she would be teaching AP Government and World History. “I have spent a lot of my adult life wondering how I could give back to Preuss. My thank you to Preuss begins on Monday.”



Students shared their robotics work with event attendees.

Following her time as a student at Preuss, Hood-Esparza attended UC San Diego as a Chancellor’s Associates Scholar majoring in political science and education studies. She then went on to earn her master’s degree at UC San Diego in 2015. After completing her student teaching at The Preuss School UC San Diego, Hood-Esparza taught humanities at High Tech High in Chula Vista while completing a credential in social studies.

In addition to Hood-Esparza’s moving talk, the evening showcased current students’ accomplishments in fine arts, drama, robotics and science. UC San Diego Executive Vice Chancellor Elizabeth H. Simmons welcomed attendees for the evening, while Valerie Stevenson, chair of The Preuss School Board of Directors, announced the school’s first-ever Preuss School Honorary Board Members: Peggy Preuss, and Pat and Chris Weil. Principal Scott Barton then took the stage to share some of the school’s recent achievements.

“At The Preuss School, two of the requirements for teachers are that they be strong in their content area and that they believe that every student is college material,” said Barton. “We have 11-year-old children coming to us in sixth grade, many who are not reading at grade level. Even at that young of an age, they already believe that they are not cut out for college.

“Our community at Preuss rallies behind each student to provide the individual support that each child needs. We tell our students from day one that they are going to college,” said Barton.

He went on to announce that so far, 87 percent of the Preuss senior class have been accepted to four-year colleges or universities. Thirty-six percent have been accepted to UC San Diego, and are eligible to receive the Chancellor’s Associates Scholarship.

“Nothing brings me greater pride than to have our seniors be awarded the Chancellor’s Associates Scholarship to attend UC San Diego—one of the best universities in the



world,” said Barton.

The Preuss School's first-ever honorary board members (from left), Peggy Preuss, and Chris and Pat Weil.

For information, about The Preuss School, or to support it, visit the [Preuss School website](#).

Keep up with campus news by subscribing to *This Week @ UC San Diego*