

UC San Diego receives major grant to initiate new dialogue with San Diego community

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UC SAN DIEGO RECEIVES MAJOR GRANT TO INITIATE NEW DIALOGUE WITH SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY

The University of California, San Diego (UCSD) has received an \$863,000 grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to fund a groundbreaking new civic effort that will initiate a new dialogue between UCSD faculty and the San Diego community, with the aim of better integrating the university's research and teaching expertise with community needs and interests.

The ambitious three-year initiative will be launched under the auspices of the newly created UCSD Civic Collaborative, to be directed by Mary Walshok, Associate Vice Chancellor for Extended Studies and professor of sociology, and Professor Michael Schudson, a sociologist and communication expert in UCSD's Division of Social Sciences. The effort will include the development of a community-focused research agenda, academic seminars and community roundtables, neighborhood dialogues and consensus building.

"Since this is one of the first programs of its kind in the U.S., the university and Pew Charitable Trusts are hoping that with this collaborative effort, we can build a new model for university-civic knowledge building and community problem-solving that will guide similar efforts in other regions of the country," said Walshok. "We are talking about developing a new paradigm for engaging the community at a neighborhood level, something which has never been done here before."

Walshok and Schudson are uniquely well-suited to take on this major task for UCSD. As Associate Vice Chancellor for UCSD's Extended Studies programs, Walshok has presided over some of the university's most successful community-based efforts, including the CONNECT and San Diego Dialogue programs. A few years ago, Walshok launched UCSD-TV, which produces programs on UCSD events and activities and is now carried on cable stations throughout the county.

Schudson, a highly regarded scholar of political communication and a top authority on the news media, is the author of the recent book, "The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life," (Free Press, 1998). A recipient of a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship (the "genius" awards), Schudson is an astute observer of American society, and has long been interested in the intersection of the academic institution and the community. Schudson's other publications include "Watergate in American Memory," "Discovering the News," and "Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion."

According to Schudson, who will oversee the research efforts of his fellow faculty members, the first step in the project will be a major effort to solicit the opinions of members of the community from a wide range of neighborhoods. National research and public opinion expert Daniel Yankelovich is also a project director and will be facilitating the neighborhood dialogues and the consensus building efforts. Community research projects will cover a wide range of issues, including religious life, family health care, after-school learning for children, immigration-related social problems and sustainable growth.

The Pew Charitable Trusts, among the nation's largest philanthropies, support nonprofit activities in culture, education, the environment, health and human services, public policy and religion. Based in Philadelphia, the Trusts make strategic investments to encourage civic engagement in addressing critical issues and effecting social change.

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