

Biology majors, pre-med students and their standing at UCSD

June 13, 1974

According to Dr. Paul Saltman, Vice Chancellor - Academic Affairs at UCSD, an increase in the number of students majoring in biology and other health related subjects began at UCSD about four or five years ago and became an early indication of what is now a growing nationwide trend.

"At the start of the 70's the campuses began to quiet down," Saltman said. "Students became anxious to find some area of learning that gave them independence but also some recognition. Medicine and related health subjects became very attractive and the trend is continuing. About 30 percent of our incoming freshmen say they want to be biologists," he said.

According to Saltman, there are two main reasons at UCSD for this move:

"One is the excitement of the field itself," he said. "We came out of an age of physics - the smashing of the atom. Then we got into an age where everybody wanted to be an engineer. All of a sudden a lot of things changed and these notions faded because people were losing jobs.

"At the same time there was great excitement and challenge in modern biology the discovery of DNA, nucleic acids, a lot of developments linked to medicine," he said.

"The second reason, more localized, is that UCSD is blessed with a remarkable array of biological talent," Saltman said. "The departments of biology, chemistry, applied mechanics, applied physics, the School of Medicine, Scripps Institution of Oceanography - everywhere you turn there are superb biologists. Not only superb researchers, but also superb teachers.

"There is a major commitment on the part of our faculty to teach well and to bring students into their laboratories and to encourage this excitement.

"And," Saltman said, "the trend is continuing. About 30 percent of our incoming freshmen say they want to be biologists."

He feels the move may soon reach a plateau and that the interest will return to engineering, chemistry and physics as those sciences continue to be challenging.

"The students will see that they can make contributions to society - not in the form of atom bombs or space missiles but rather in the humanistic form of how to clean up the environment, how to deliver health care, how to develop mass transit - things that were rather lost in the hectic years of the 50's and 60's," he said.

Item: Forty to forty-five percent of UCSD's graduating class will go on to professional or graduate school - about five times the national average...

"There has been an enormous change in the students' own dedication to learning," Saltman said. "Five years ago - 1969 - was a time of great social unrest on the campus coupled with great emotional unrest in society

itself. The pressures of that period have been relaxed and the students have taken a very constructive view of themselves - of what they can do as human beings.

"The students today want to learn and at UCSD this is indicated by what our graduates are doing," Saltman said. "About 40 to 45 percent of our graduating class go on to professional and graduate schools immediately following graduation. That is about five times the national average and a very exciting thing.

"We are delighted to see our students from the humanities, social sciences and sciences going on into the best graduate schools in the country. I think this is best characterized by noting the very large number of UCSD students who are receiving national competitive scholarships," he said.

"For example, the National Science Foundation gave out six awards for graduate work in linguistics to graduating seniors. Two of the six in the United States went to our students. Similarly, a large number of our students have received National Institutes of Health fellowships, NSF fellowships, and other foundation fellowships," Saltman said.

"We're proud of these students because they are really the researchers and the teachers for the future."

Item: More than half of the 130 University of California, San Diego students who applied for medical school this year have been accepted for the fall term. Nationally, about one-third of those who apply get in ...

At any given point during the academic year Jean Parks, coordinator of the UCSD Premedical Advisory Committee, is dealing with some 2,000 students interested in continuing their education in a health related field. Probably 1,200 to 1,500 of these students are mainly interested in medicine and dentistry but a growing number are indicating an interest in other areas of the health field including public health, medical technology, and pharmacy.

The UCSD Class of 1974 has produced what has been called "a vintage crop" of premedical students. Out of 130 who were assisted in some way by the advisory program, 75 have been accepted to medical schools throughout the country and it is possible that even more will be accepted during the summer.

"That is 75 students that I know of," Mrs. Parks said. "There could be several who graduated a year or two ago and applied on their own or through the graduate school where they are now working. Also," she said, "there are still more students who have been accepted into such places as the School of Public Health at Harvard or several of the top pharmacy schools that we don't have any record of. We often don't know they have been accepted unless the school informs us

At present, UCSD students have been accepted at 46 medical schools though, because of multiple acceptances, they will not be attending that number in the fall. Last year it was 35 schools and the year before that, 25.

"What this means is that past UCSD students are doing very well in the schools they were accepted to and the word is getting around," Mrs. Parks said. "Also, medical schools are beginning to recognize the work of our premedical committee and our faculty who have done a superb job in writing evaluations of our students."

The Premedical Advisory Committee is made up of nine faculty members who, with Mrs. Parks, interview all UCSD medical school candidates who request it, advise them on their applications and, finally, write letters of recommendation to medical schools throughout the country. For any student, getting into medical school depends upon a combination of grades, the Medical College Admission Test score, faculty evaluations, and many judgmental factors that are difficult to pinpoint.

The percentage of candidates accepted to medical schools throughout the country from UCSD has been steadily increasing for the past several years.

"The current figure of nearly 58 percent acceptance is really remarkable for a public institution such as UCSD," Mrs. Parks said.

(June 13, 1974)