

Students Get Crash Course in Responding to Life's Unexpected Turns



Students were invited to learn about the fundamentals of how their car functions and how to respond to roadside emergencies in a new interactive Life Skills workshop hosted by the UC San Diego Women's Center. Photos by Erika Johnson/University Communications

You're cruising along the highway and suddenly the dreaded "check engine" light blinks on your dashboard. As you rifle through your manual trying to determine the cause, steam starts rising from under the hood. What now? On Jan. 27, students at UC San Diego were invited to learn how to respond to just such roadside emergencies as part of a new Life Skills series. The workshop, hosted by the [UC San Diego Women's Center](#), also focused on how to find a reputable repair shop. Studies have shown that women, in particular, can be the target of higher price quotes on auto repairs.

The Life Skills Program began in 2014 at the Cross-Cultural Center and expanded in fall 2015 to include programming from all of the five Campus Community Centers. Violeta Gonzales, assistant director of the Cross-Cultural Center, developed the initial idea when students began addressing her with questions about personal finance, household management and civic responsibilities. She decided to create a holistic program to provide students with practical skills that aren't learned inside the classroom. The series also tackles the larger social context of issues such as the gender wage gap and sexism in the workplace.

“Throughout the year, students would come to me with questions about finances, wellness—even buying a house and retirement planning,” said Gonzales. “This wisdom is often learned through trial and error. I wanted to create a structured program led by experts on campus and in the community to teach students these skills that they will use throughout their life.”

Students met on Sun God lawn, where they huddled around a car, peering into the engine and deciphering the gauges and warning lights on the dashboard. The “Roadside Survival Skills” workshop was guided by Gary and Sharon Anderberg, owners of Aero Auto Repair located in Kearny Mesa. They led students through a series of emergency situations and how to respond, from brake pedal failure to engine overheating. They also shared insight on maintenance basics such as fluid changes and hose replacements.

“I decided to take part in the workshop because I think it's important to know what to do if I were to ever have car troubles, especially if I had to handle the situation on my own,” said Alison Sweet, a freshman majoring in clinical psychology. “I also recently read a study on how it is common for women to be overcharged at auto repair shops, so I wanted to learn how to detect an unfair deal.”



Students gathered on Sun God lawn to learn a range of skills, from how to respond to brake failure to the basics of fluid changes and what dashboard gauges indicate.



A complementary workshop set, the Real World Career series prepares students with professional skills and covers topics like the gender wage gap and sexism in the workplace.

The workshop was held to empower students by teaching them the fundamentals of how their car functions and what questions to ask when searching for a reliable auto repair business. They were also reminded that work cannot be done on their car without their signed approval, and used parts can be inspected to ensure the repair was justified.

The new program complements a similar workshop set that focuses on developing student's professional knowledge, the Real World Career Series. Begun three years ago in partnership with the Campus Community Centers, Department of Ethnic Studies, UC San Diego Alumni and the UC San Diego Career Services Center, workshops cover a range of topics from salary negotiation to building an effective resume and networking tips. Some of the series offered have included, "Careers Paths of Queer Black Women," "Alternative Non-Traditional Interviewing" and "Non-Profit Networking Night."

Programs for both series happen regularly each quarter. Upcoming Life Skills workshops will include "College Success and Mental Health" from 5-7 p.m. on May 12 at the Cross-Cultural Center. Future Real World Career Series workshops to be offered include "Resume Building and Art Portfolio Workshop" from 3-5 p.m. on February 10 at the Cross-Cultural Center and "Start Smart: Salary Negotiation for Students" from 4-6 p.m. at the Women's Center.

Numerous workshops, lectures, peer mentoring and other programs are held throughout the year at the five Campus Community Centers, which are units under the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. As places of engagement and belonging, the centers—including the Black Resource Center, Cross-Cultural Center, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Resource Center, Raza Resource Centro, and Women’s Center—facilitate interactive learning, promote self-awareness, foster leadership, improve retention, build community and encourage dialogue among students, faculty, staff, alumni and the local community. To learn more, go [here](#).



Students were invited to share their most important skills and how they could sell their personal brand during the most recent workshop on salary negotiation.

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