

UC San Diego Kicks Off Student Welcome Week with 4th Annual Convocation Event

Speakers include Calit2 founding director Larry Smarr and alumna Alejandra Sotelo-Solis

September 1, 2009

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Convocation speaker Larry Smarr, Ph.D. is the founding director of the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2)

Internet pioneer Larry Smarr and the director of UC San Diego's Community Law Project, Alejandra Sotelo-Solis '01, will address more than 4,000 students and faculty at the 2009 Welcome Week Convocation and Dinner on Tuesday, September 22 on RIMAC Field.

As the inaugural academic event of the year, Convocation marks the formal entrance of new students into the UC San Diego community. A pivotal moment for freshmen and transfer students, the event will also include Vice Chancellor Penny Rue and A.S. Student President Ustav Gupta as speakers, who will welcome all attendees and offer advice on excelling at the university. After the ceremony, dinner will be served on RIMAC field and faculty and administrators will be available to speak with incoming students about their aspirations at UC San Diego.

For more than two decades, Larry Smarr, Ph.D., has been a global leader in advancing innovation in information technology. In 1983, he initiated the first proposal to the National Science Foundation (NSF) recommending the development of a national supercomputer center program which, together with UCSD's San Diego Supercomputer Center, spawned what we know today as the commercial Internet, Web browsers and other inventions.

Alumna and Convocation speaker Alejandra Sotelo-Solis is director of the UC San Diego Community Law Project

Today, Smarr is the founding director of the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2), a partnership of UC San Diego and UC Irvine. On the UCSD campus alone, this multidisciplinary institute involves nearly 1,000 students, faculty and staff researchers drawn from more than two dozen departments. Together with industry partners, Calit2 develops new technologies to improve California's future in areas such as disaster response, broadband and wireless communications, biomedical informatics and responses to climate change.

"These entering UC San Diego students were just starting to crawl when we developed the first Web browser, so they are digital 'natives' who have always lived in a digital world," said Smarr. "But we are still in the very early days of the digital revolution, and there is no doubt that information and communications technologies will play a critical role in helping us solve some of the most demanding societal problems—from climate change and energy efficiency to finding cures for many fatal diseases. UC San Diego students should take advantage of all the opportunities in front of them to do undergraduate research and participate in outreach programs that use technology for the betterment of society."

As director of the UC San Diego Community Law Project, Alejandra Sotelo-Solis works with undergraduate students pursuing careers in law and public policy. While a UCSD student, she was active in the Cross-Cultural Center and was a resident advisor in Eleanor Roosevelt College. She was the community education coordinator of the annual Hate-Free Campus Campaign in the Student Office for Human Relations, and was selected to receive a UC San Diego Oceanids Award for her community service.

Chancellor Marye Anne Fox greets students at the 2008 UC San Diego Convocation

After receiving her bachelor's degree in political science in 2001, Sotelo-Solis was one of only 60 individuals across the nation selected for a CORO fellowship in public policy in Los Angeles. She continues to be active in the community, serving her first term as a council member and vice mayor of National City and member of the San Diego Cesar E. Chavez Commemorative Committee. Sotelo-Solis is also involved with San Diego MANA, a youth mentorship organization; South Bay Forum, a political action committee; and was chair of the American Diabetes Association Health Fair/Feria de Salud. She is a past president of the UCSD Chicano Alumni Association.

"My years at UC San Diego helped reinforce the foundation for my future of becoming a public servant," said Sotelo-Solis. "My desire to improve the quality of life for those around me and to fight for social justice issues was reinforced in and out of the classroom. This year I encourage our newest students to take advantage of the diverse opportunities that the next years have to offer."

Each of the six UC San Diego colleges are represented at Convocation

Convocation kicks off UC San Diego's Welcome Week. About 3,740 freshmen and 1,860 new transfer students are set to take part in more than 115 activities on campus from September 20 to 23, before the first day of classes on September 24. Events range from the spirited Triton Power Hour pep rally Monday at RIMAC, to the six-college UnOlympics competition at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday on the North Campus track.

Additional Welcome Week activities include the Welcome Week Dance on Sunday, September 20; Student Services Fair and UCSD Block Party on Monday, September 21; and First Friday, an open house celebration at the Price Center on Friday, September 25. Additional information about Welcome Week is available at <http://welcomeweek.ucsd.edu>.

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