

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

By Christine Clark

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Elevating High Schools to New Heights

UC President Napolitano and Chancellor Khosla's message to students: UC is within reach



UC President Janet Napolitano, who served as emcee at the Achieve UC rally, highlighted UC's mission and culture of accessibility, affordability and inclusion. Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego

A degree from the University of California is achievable, affordable and possible. This central message was delivered to hundreds of Morse High School students by UC President Janet Napolitano and UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla at this year's Achieve UC event on April 18. The event also marked the start of a major initiative for UC San Diego: Morse High School, located in Southeast San Diego, was officially inducted as a partner school in the Chancellor Associates Scholarship Program. The scholarship provides freshmen

with a four-year award of up to \$40,000, and transfer students with a two-year award of up to \$20,000. When coupled with financial aid, the program offers students resources that cover the cost of education, including housing and supplies, making it possible for families and students to avoid loans while earning their undergraduate degree.

This year, the scholarship opportunity expanded to eligible students from over 100 high schools, community colleges and community-based organizations across the state—with a goal of reaching 800 scholars. The program will continue to serve local partners, which in addition to Morse includes students from Lincoln High School, Gompers Preparatory Academy, The Preuss School UC San Diego, e3 Civic High and Hoover High School. Students from Reality Changers—a local program that helps youth from underserved communities—and California students enrolled in federally recognized tribes are also eligible. In addition, eligible transfer students from San Diego City College, Southwestern College and Imperial Valley College are able to participate.

UC is here to help students achieve their dreams, and exceed them

“When it comes to college, money should never be a fear or reason that stops you,” Khosla said to students at the rally-style event in the Morse gymnasium. “My commitment to you starts today. As a student at an official partner school, you are now eligible for a four-year, loan-free education at UC San Diego.”

He spoke about how Chancellor’s Associates Scholars can access a wide range of services and opportunities to ensure that they thrive as undergraduate students, and are fully engaged in academics, student life and university experiences.

Khosla highlighted how the announcement is a game-changer for this year’s 22 eligible Morse High seniors who were recently admitted to UC San Diego

“If there is anyone who deserves this, it is young men and women like you,” he said.

Khosla also announced another exciting initiative that the campus will launch to increase access to San Diego students. UC San Diego Extension will soon also offer A-G courses online at no charge to all San Diego Unified students, making it easier and more affordable for students to meet the requirements of admission to the University of California.



Napolitano, who served as emcee at the rally, praised the success of the Chancellor's Associates Scholars Program and applauded the new partnership between Morse High School and UC San Diego.

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Throughout the event, she highlighted UC's mission and culture of accessibility, affordability and inclusion. "You might be asking yourself, 'Do I belong at the University of California?' The answer is, 'Yes, you do,' " she said. "UC has one of the most diverse student bodies in the country. Half of our students come from low-income households and about 42 percent are the first in their family to attend a four-year college."

In addition, she also spoke about the UC Blue and Gold Opportunity program, which is available to students across the state. "If you come from a family that makes less than \$80,000 a year, you will pay no tuition or fees at the university," she said. "As a result, more than half of our California resident students attend UC tuition free."

Once these students graduate, they continue to reap the benefits of a UC education. More than 50 percent of UC's undergraduates from the poorest families in the state surpass their parent's income within the first five years of graduating.

Unmatched resources and opportunities with a UC education

Napolitano and Khosla were joined by other representatives from UC San Diego who addressed the freshmen and sophomores in the audience and informed them of the vast resources UC has to offer—from generous financial aid packages to unmatched research opportunities and numerous communities that provide a sense of belonging to the university's diverse student body. Among the speakers were UC San Diego alumna and San Diego Unified Superintendent Cindy Marten, as well as UC Student Association President Caroline Siegel-Singh, a current UC San Diego student who graduated from Morse High School in 2017.

"UC San Diego has a very special place in my heart," Marten said. "I earned my master's degree in education studies from UC San Diego and learned about educational research which made me the educator I am today....My education from UC San Diego allowed me to become the superintendent of the state's second largest school district."

Marten also praised Siegel-Singh, a political science major and urban studies minor, who represents and advocates for the thousands of students across the entire UC system as president of the UC Student Association (UCSA).



Addressing students at her alma mater, Siegel-Singh encouraged the crowd to reach for their dreams. “I want to make it clear that you all have a place at the University of California,” she said. “I want all of you to think about your futures because when you attain higher education, it is not just for you. You bring your families, you bring your siblings and you bring your community with you and you rise together.”

Siegel-Singh also relayed to the crowd that she, like many other UC students, pays no tuition because she is eligible for the University’s Blue and Gold Opportunity Program.

Words of wisdom from Morse High School alums to future tritons

Following the rally, Khosla, Napolitano, Marten and Siegel-Singh were joined by additional Morse High School alumni who currently attend UC San Diego. The group held a question and answer session with seniors from the school recently admitted to the campus. Khosla, again, spoke about the Chancellor’s Associates Scholars Program partnership between the high school and university as it applied to students in the room.

“As students, you should not be burdened with debt upon graduation,” he said.

Many of the students reacted to the news with looks of disbelief, initially, followed by smiles.

Yasir Althalmi is one of those students who thought the new financial aid package seemed too good to be true. But he couldn’t be more thrilled to attend UC San Diego in the fall and take advantage of the many opportunities at the school.

“My goal is to be the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations,” Althalmi said. “I look forward to expanding my social network at UC San Diego and getting involved as much as I can. I want to join the campus’s Model UN, and I know a lot of alumni go into the Peace Corps. In addition, international relations and public policy faculty at UC San Diego are incredibly impressive.”



Morse High School alumni who currently attend UC San Diego held a question and answer session with seniors from the school recently admitted to UC San Diego.

Althami and the other incoming UC San Diego freshmen in the audience heard first-hand accounts of how UC San Diego transformed the lives of Morse alumni, such as Ikran Ibrahim. A biochemistry and cell biology major, Ibrahim recommended that students pursue their passion on campus, something Ibrahim does herself. She currently works two jobs and has an internship as an undergraduate research assistant at the Center for Aerosol Impacts on the Chemistry of the Environment (CAICE). In addition, Ibrahim also makes time in her busy schedule to participate in a comedy improv troupe, and Muir College's student group for yo-yo enthusiasts.

"The best thing to do for incoming students, in my opinion, is to try as much and do as much while here," Ibrahim said. "Join that club, take that class, take that professor out to coffee, and give the things that interest you a shot. Whether you think you qualify or not, just do it."

"College is a place where you can find yourself," she added. "I definitely discovered my identity at UC San Diego."