

Connections, Camaraderie, Community



Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

Three alums reflect on impact of their UC San Diego experience at commencement ceremonies

“Life is a journey, not a destination...” Those are words of wisdom from American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. But according to three keynote alumni speakers at UC San Diego’s commencement ceremonies life isn’t just about the journey, it’s about the people you meet along the way.

And for former Olympic kayaker Carrie Johnson Gubser, musician Nathan East, and former U.S. Ambassador to India Tim Roemer, the people they met at UC San Diego allowed them to take risks, pursue their passions and forge three very different and dynamic career pathways.

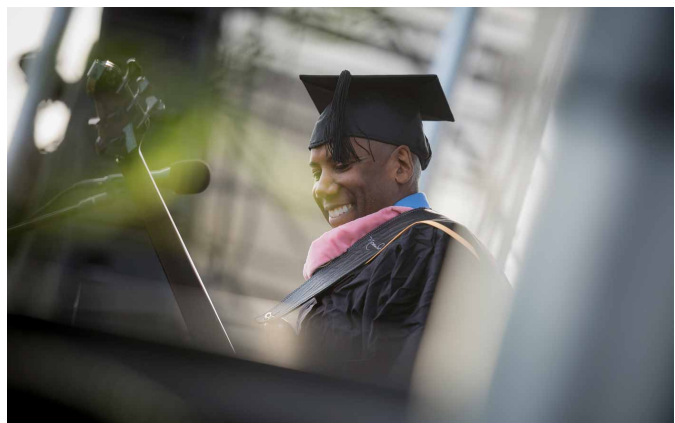
The three speakers participated in the campus's graduation ceremonies over the weekend, where more than 5,000 students received degrees from all six undergraduate colleges. In addition, this spring an additional 2,000 graduate students in medicine, pharmacy, management and other disciplines received advanced degrees.

Chancellor Khosla participated in all eleven commencement ceremonies.

"This is a very special time for UC San Diego," said Khosla. "We are recognizing these students, who during their time here, have grown intellectually, made lifelong friendships, helped shape the future of this university and made the campus a better place."

The weekend started off with the seventh annual All Campus Graduation Celebration held Friday. On Saturday, Eleanor Roosevelt, Revelle and Warren colleges held their ceremonies, as did the Office of Graduate Studies.

At the Revelle College commencement ceremony, Johnson Gubser addressed about 850 graduating students. The three-time Olympian is a UC San Diego alumna who graduated with a degree in biochemistry in 2009. Today, she is a student at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine who is expected to graduate in 2016.



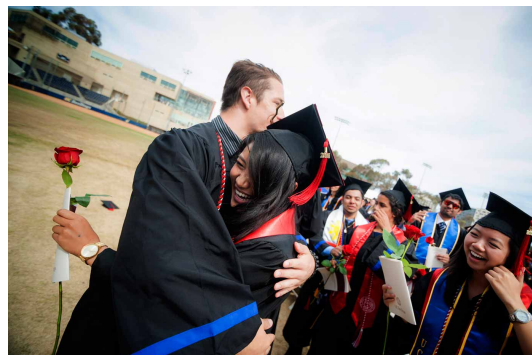
Nathan East

"I did not have a traditional college experience because of training and travel for international competitions, but I am sure that the essence of my experience was very similar to yours," Johnson Gubser said. "I developed as an athlete and a student and, despite having taken a little extra time, I earned my degree while having the honor of representing the U.S. in the 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games... I also developed on a personal level after being diagnosed with Crohn's disease during my freshman year

and being challenged with adjusting to a new 'normal' of living with a chronic disease."

Johnson Gubser admitted to the crowd that she was nervous about delivering the keynote address, as she had to miss her graduation ceremony because of her competition schedule at the time; she said she was excited, however, to deliver the message to students to recognize the contributions of their peers and mentors who have enabled their success.

“During my athletic career, I have had several coaches who have gone above and beyond to make sure that I had the support to achieve my highest potential,” she said. “I am sure that many of you have made connections with the amazing faculty here at UC San Diego...I have to thank my organic chemistry TA who really helped to provide me with a base in the subject and countless other professors and TAs who have given their time to provide academic support and write letters of recommendations.”



Johnson Gubser also relayed the benefits she’s reaped from sharing her story as a Crohn’s disease patient. “I did not anticipate how much the act of sharing would help me with living my life with Crohn’s,” she said. “It is quite gratifying when you can see the positive impact you have made on someone’s life,” she said.

On Sunday, Thurgood Marshall College held the first commencement event at 8 a.m. on RIMAC field. Nathan East served as keynote speaker and, fittingly, started off the event with a musical performance of “America the Beautiful.” The bassist and member of UC San Diego’s class of ’78 has played with Eric Clapton, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, Madonna, Daft Punk and Beyoncé, among others. In his speech to the college’s 968 graduating students, East reflected on his years as an undergraduate at UC San Diego.

“I can tell you of the years I walked along this campus; they were some of the most enjoyable years of my life,” East said. “I am grateful for the time I was on this campus for many reasons. I am grateful for my education, but the extent of what I learned at UC San Diego is not limited to what I learned in the classroom... I learned about work ethic, I learned about integrity, I learned about finishing something that you start, I learned about relationships, I learned about life.”

He continued, “But the thing I am most grateful for is that about 40 years ago today, just yards from here, I met my soul mate, the lady of my dreams, my wife, Anita.”



Johnson Gubser

East recalled the time he met Anita—an alumnus and pediatrician—when she graciously helped East find a parking spot while he rushing to get to class. “40 years later Anita and I are happily married and she is here with us today and our two children,” East said.

Following Thurgood Marshall College’s commencement ceremony, Muir College and Sixth College held their graduation events, as did the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies (IR/PS), where former U.S.

Ambassador to India Tim Roemer addressed the school’s 143 graduating students.

Roemer also is a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives and a 9/11 Commissioner. He earned a bachelor’s degree from UC San Diego in 1979 and currently is a strategic counselor for Global Political Strategies in Washington D.C.

Roemer spoke about how the faculty and friends he met at UC San Diego were central to his success.



“My experience at the University of California, San Diego, even more specifically at John Muir College and majoring in political science, was extraordinary,” Roemer said. “And, of particular importance, I made lifelong and loyal friends at [this] school.”

He continued, “While my GPA might have been a lot higher, my ability to construct meaning, happiness and purpose from UCSD is a solid 4.0...Our college institutions are sometimes referred to as ‘cathedrals of higher learning,’ and I was truly fortunate that UC San Diego motivated me to reach for the heights of my analytical abilities, my sense of community, and my desire to work in an honorable profession – public policy.”

Roemer spoke to the students and parents in the audience about the value of the degrees earned at IR/PS, a preeminent school for international relations which has a curriculum that stresses a strong understanding of how public policy, management and international interactions shape strategic decision making.

“You will find great jobs,” he said to the new alums. “You can be a part of making history. You can help directly impact people’s lives. And you can positively change the world.”

He also encouraged the graduates to push themselves and take risks.

“Every big decision [my wife] Sally and I have made in our lives – getting married, running for Congress, having four children, and moving to India to represent the United States – has involved great risk, potential failure, and undefined obstacles,” Roemer said. “Still, each one of those decisions was the right one that resulted in enormous personal growth, bringing our family closer together, and teaching us wonderful lessons about the world... and maybe even creating small ripples of hope and opportunity for others.”