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Students Share Ideas at Town Hall to Define UC San Diego's Future



Student town hall forum. Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

Several hundred students joined Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla at two town hall forums last week as part of the campus-wide strategic planning process to define shared goals and a unifying vision for UC San Diego. The student-focused meetings offered undergraduates and graduates an opportunity to share their thoughts on how the university can improve and strengthen its impact.

“Students are an important part of this strategic planning process and your participation is vital,” Khosla emphasized. “We need to be a student-centered, student-focused university. At the end of the day, you are the reason we are here.”

Similar to the town halls for faculty and staff in December, Khosla started the events with a presentation in which he explained how the planning process will work and conveyed key goals that he believes are imperative to UC San Diego's continued success, such as growing the number of graduate students on campus, increasing private support and improving the campus's student-to-faculty ratio.



“We know that we want to be a leading university that enriches human life and provides opportunity for all,” Khosla said. “We also want to be a university that maintains access and affordability, and is diverse.”

Following the presentation, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Suresh Subramani led a brainstorming session with students during which they discussed ways to improve UC San Diego's academic excellence and student life.

Student feedback on UC San Diego's strengths included its stellar academic reputation; professors who challenge students intellectually; dynamic interdisciplinary programs and the small campus experience provided by the six-college system.

Junior Cody Marshall said he wanted to see the university's role in the San Diego community continue to grow. “I am from San Diego,” he said. “It was Chancellor [Marye Anne] Fox's presence in the community that made me want to attend

UCSD.”

His thoughts were echoed by Subramani who said the campus is strongly committed to reaching out to the local community. These local connections play an important role in building UC San Diego's diversity, he said.

Grant Burger-White, a member of the campus's Black Student Union, talked about the need for increased diversity among UC San Diego's students. “To improve the academic experience, there needs to be an emphasis of reaching a critical mass of students of color, underrepresented and underserved students,” Burger-White said.

Burger-White and Subramani discussed the campus's yield rates (accepts of offers of admission) among underrepresented students as a means to increase diversity on campus.

Students also expressed an interest in learning more about UC San Diego's academic and student life resources and the need to introduce more career planning during an undergraduate's first and second years in college.

Ideas to improve the campus social experience included more designated facility spaces for student organizations and activities, and to make those spaces easier to schedule.

Annika Nabors, a Thurgood Marshall College student, said that it wasn't until she began working at the General Store Co-op that she truly felt included in the campus community. "Student-run spaces are incredibly important because they allow students to express their own experiences," Nabors said.

The need to help students make connections between theoretical learning and real-world applications also was a topic of discussion.

Andrew Buselt, a third year student at John Muir College, said that his most memorable academic experiences at UC San Diego were completing courses in ethnic studies and critical gender studies, but he wanted to see these disciplines promoted more. "[These classes] allow students to think critically about society, race, gender and class." He added that he hopes sustainability initiatives will be included in the campus's strategic plan.

Subramani concluded the brainstorming session by thanking students for sharing their insights. "It's been a very active discussion. You've touched on a whole range of issues," Subramani said. "I learned a lot from what you had to say."

The strategic planning process will continue throughout the first half of 2013. To learn more about the strategic planning process and to submit your comments online, go to <http://plan.ucsd.edu/>.



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