

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

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Finding a Path to the Green Job Industry

UC San Diego Creates the Next Generation of Professionals Creating a More Sustainable Future



The Advisory Committee on Sustainability recognizes individuals and groups that have made UC San Diego more sustainable. Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

“I felt like I was making a difference when I was interning at UC San Diego, but now I feel like my work is making a global difference,” said University of California, San Diego alum Ahmina Ahmad, whose green job experience at UC San Diego helped her win her current position with the environment and conservation department at Walt Disney Company.

Students at UC San Diego are getting hands-on experience in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification process by participating and managing LEED projects, implementing facility energy efficiency and water conservation programs and conducting waste

audits. These experiences have helped many students like Ahmad get a green job after graduation. Several UC San Diego graduates, such as LEED Accredited Professionals or Green Associates, leave UC San Diego with professional credentials that help them obtain jobs immediately upon graduation.

“At UC San Diego, we’re dedicated to producing citizens of the 21st century who will lead our country in finding solutions to our most pressing environmental problems,” said Gary C. Matthews, UC San Diego’s vice chancellor for Resource Management and Planning. “Students at UC San Diego are not only getting experience in growing industries, they are promoting conservation locally, nationally and globally through working collaboratively with communities, governments and businesses.”

From economics to mechanical engineering and environmental systems, academic departments have incorporated sustainability concepts into majors, minors, internships, classes, and a wide range of research experiences.

In addition, the PowerSave Green Campus program, office of Building Commissioning and Sustainability, Housing, Dining and Hospitality, and the Sustainability Solutions Institute offer internships that provide students firsthand experience implementing sustainability on campus.

“At UC San Diego, there are a lot of opportunities that provide students with the knowledge and work experience necessary to enter the green job market and succeed,” said Kristin Hansen, UC San Diego sustainability program manager. “This university is a great place for developing students’ dreams of impacting climate change and preserving our planet.”

The campus also is home to many green student organizations and the Sustainability Resource Center serves as a one-stop sustainability shop at UC San Diego where students can learn about green jobs and courses and initiatives related to local, national and global sustainability.

Top Green Jobs for UC San Diego Grads



“Green” jobs come in many varieties and are in many fields. Here is a sampling of the top environmental/sustainability jobs and internship opportunities that are available to UC San Diego students. They represent positions landed by UC San Diego grads and job listings posted in the Career Services Center website:

- Biofuels Engineering Intern
- Biofuels Intern Biologist
- Biological Consultant
- Biological Monitor
- Building Commissioning and Sustainability Assistant
- Environmental Engineer
- Environmental Planner
- Environmental Projects Coordinator
- Environmental Scientist
- Geographic Information Systems Analyst
- Oceanographic Engineer Assistant
- Renewable Energy Analyst
- Sustainable Communities Associate

For more information on UC San Diego’s Career Services Center, go to: <http://career.ucsd.edu/>

Ahmad said she learned the importance of caring for the environment while a student at UC San Diego.

“Honestly, I entered UC San Diego as a freshman knowing close to nothing about sustainability,” said Ahmad. “After taking a freshman-level biology class centered on human impacts and the environment, I wanted to learn more about sustainability and get involved in the real-life applications of it.”

Following her freshmen year, Ahmad held two internships—she worked as a Green Campus project coordinator for more than two years, employed by both UC San Diego and Alliance to Save Energy, a national non-profit. She also worked as an intern for the Sustainability Program Office for seven months, analyzing and updating a portion of UC San Diego’s climate action plan. Ahmad believes that the skills and experiences she gained from these internships gave her a necessary edge when applying for jobs.

In Ahmad’s current position, she is creating a database of Disney’s sustainable projects, compiling their greenhouse gas inventory and researching ways that the company can be more environmentally conscious. She also is completing her Master of Science in environmental science at Loyola Marymount University.



Jessica Wall, a UC San Diego alum, also took advantage of the various “green” opportunities at UC San Diego. She worked as a Green Campus intern and teaching assistant, while double majoring in environmental systems and economics. According to Wall, her undergraduate experience helped her get into the University of Michigan Law School and has taken her one step further to reaching her dream of becoming an environmental lawyer.

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“This past summer, I worked as an intern with the environmental crimes section of the U.S. Attorney’s office in Los Angeles,” said Wall. “It was my dream job. I loved every day of it. It truly confirmed that environmental law is the field for me.”

UC San Diego teaches its students about sustainability not only through the opportunities it offers, but also through the culture of its campus, according to UC San Diego alum Derek Chung.

“I learned about sustainability because I wanted to work with people who were passionate about something...I found them in the sustainability movement at UC San Diego,” said Chung.

Chung is a former president of UC San Diego’s chapter of Engineers for a Sustainable World, a national non-profit. After graduating, he became the assistant development director of the larger California chapter of the organization.

“My motivation is to find a career that creates the most positive world impact,” said Chung. “I am passionate about the environment because nothing more pure and beautiful exists.”

For more information on the sustainability initiatives at UC San Diego, go to sustainability.ucsd.edu.

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