

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

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The Preuss School UCSD Named One of ‘America’s Most Challenging High Schools’ by The Washington Post

Charter school also named a Breakthrough School by national principals association



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The Preuss School UCSD was named one of “America’s Most Challenging High Schools” in The Washington Post’s annual rankings of how successfully schools challenge their students.

Preuss – a charter middle and high school for low-income students who strive to become the

first in their families to graduate from college – was ranked no. 1 in San Diego County, no. 7 in California and 65th nationally.

“Young minds flourish when given opportunity and encouragement, both of which are provided in abundance at The Preuss School,” said UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “It is an honor for the school to be recognized for its rigorous college-prep education that transforms lives and communities, here in San Diego and beyond.”

Produced by The Washington Post’s education columnist, Jay Mathews, the annual list ranks schools through an index formula that is a simple ratio: the number of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Advanced International Certificate of Education tests given at a school each year, divided by the number of seniors who graduated that year. A ratio of 1.000 means the school had the same number of tests as graduates. Preuss’ ratio was 7.389 and it was the highest ranked school that had 100 percent of its students from low-income families.

“We believe that you should challenge all students with rigorous coursework,” said Scott Barton, principal of The Preuss School UCSD. At Preuss, Barton said, each student takes at least six Advanced Placement courses with some students taking up to 11, or sometimes more.

“But, we also provide them with the support they need to succeed,” he added. “This creates an environment where students are challenged as well as empowered.”

The Washington Post recognition comes on the heels of another honor. Preuss is one of 26 middle and high schools throughout the country redesignated as one of the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ (NASSP) 2017 Breakthrough Schools. The Breakthrough Schools program recognizes middle and high schools that serve large numbers of students in poverty and are high achieving or demonstrate dramatically improving student achievement. Schools are selected based on documented success in implementing strategies aligned with the three core areas of NASSP’s *Breaking Ranks II* Framework, including: collaborative leadership; personalization; and curriculum, instruction and assessment. Preuss was initially recognized for academic success as a NASSP 2012 Breakthrough School. Each of the original Breakthrough Schools was recently evaluated to determine if they had continuously sustained their student achievement over the years since the initial recognition.

“It is an honor to be recognized for all of our ongoing achievements,” said Barton. “The Preuss School’s success is the result of hard work, dedication and teachers, staff, families and communities working together to support our students.”

The Preuss School is chartered by the San Diego Unified School District and operated by UC San Diego. More than 800 students come from throughout San Diego County to participate in a single-track college preparatory curriculum and take advantage of an array of academic supports including tutoring, mentoring and counseling. A key tenet of the Preuss model is its commitment to longer learning time. Preuss students are in school longer each day and for 18 more days a year than the typical student in California, which adds up to almost an entire extra academic year over the course of their middle and high school careers. The cost of these extra days of instruction is not covered by the state and is funded, in part, by private support.

To learn more about The Washington Post's annual rankings and the NASSP Breakthrough Schools program, visit the [America's Most Challenging High Schools](#) and [NASSP](#) websites. For more information on The Preuss School UCSD, visit the Preuss [website](#).

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