

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

By Michelle Franklin

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Winners from the 2018 Pitch @ Ignite competition won over \$20,000 in prizes. Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

UC San Diego Ignites Southern California's Entrepreneurs and Innovators at Third Annual Conference

Ignite 2019 will be held Feb. 20 and 21 on the UC San Diego campus. Registration fees range from \$8-45 for students, academics and general public. For free or discounted tickets, please contact your department. If you'd like to participate, volunteer or attend Ignite, [visit Ignite's website](#).

Part of the mission of the Office of Innovation and Commercialization (OIC) at UC San Diego is to “empower a diverse entrepreneurial culture on campus and strengthen a dynamic innovation ecosystem.” One way they do this is through Ignite @ UC San Diego, the campus’s flagship innovation conference. The annual event, to be held Feb. 20-21, connects risk-takers, rule-breakers and changemakers across the Cali-Baja region for two days jam-packed with hands-on learning, competitions and purposeful connections.

“UC San Diego is proud to be such an integral part of the region’s innovation ecosystem,” said UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “Ignite is a great example of how we can bring entrepreneurs from around the country to San Diego. I’m looking forward to my ‘fireside chat’ on the future of San Diego’s innovation economy with Mayor Faulconer, Council President Pro-Tem Barbara Bry and San Diego Regional EDC CEO Mark Cafferty.”

In its two-year existence, Ignite has brought together more than 2,800 innovative and entrepreneurial minds from across the Cali-Baja region, multiple states and 10 countries. More than 100 teams have participated in pitch competitions with over \$58,000 in cash prizes awarded and more than \$1.5 million in-kind services given to competitors and attendees.

Ignite has wide support across campus and throughout the innovation community. In addition to critical outside support from organizations such as Musick Davidson LLP and CKR Law, the event’s on-campus support comes from more than 25 organizations including Jacobs School of Engineering, Rady School of Management, Student Affairs, Physical Sciences, Health Sciences and Alumni.

Such support shows that entrepreneurship isn’t relegated to only one field of study or one type of product, says Paul Roben, associate vice chancellor for Innovation and Commercialization. “Our goal is really to have a culture of innovation on campus. The fact that we’re able to pull in support from so many different areas shows that it’s beginning to take hold.”



Audiences are invited to attend a variety of keynote lectures and workshops at Ignite.

This year’s conference will include a mix of favorite events from past years with new events. The Startup Battle, where competitors rap their pitches, and the Startup Showcase, where new companies demonstrate their groundbreaking innovations, are both back. As is the marquee event, The Pitch @ Ignite, where teams have four minutes to pitch their products to a panel of investor judges in the hopes of winning a part of the \$30,000 prize package.

Last year's winning pitch team came from UCLA. Their company was Mechanodontics, which allows tooth realignment to happen behind the teeth, rather than in front as with traditional braces. Fam Rad, chief business officer for Mechanodontics, said he was impressed with the high caliber of the other contestants. They used the \$12,000 prize to develop the software interface used by orthodontists.

"Ignite was a great event for us. We were able to develop our software and meet potential investors—we even met a few patients!" Rad said.

Another company, Soundcollide, placed third in the pitch competition last year. Founder and CEO Robert Hatcher used the prize money to hire web developers. Soundcollide, which allows recording artists and producers to record together remotely in real time, recently graduated from the accelerator program at ComcastNBCUniversal. Hatcher's favorite part of Ignite? "The networking was incredible," he enthused.

Don't forget to follow Ignite on Facebook and Twitter: @igniteUCSD. Whether you're attending, participating or volunteering, tag us and use our hashtags during the event: #igniteucsd #Ignite2019 #TritonChangemakers.

More than 100 speakers throughout the conference will talk about the intersection of passion and business. Keynote speakers include Mark Beam, director of innovation and design at the Kauffman Foundation and Jean Case, chairman of the National Geographic Society and CEO of the Case Foundation.

Tyler Riewer, brand content lead for Charity: Water, will also deliver a keynote speech focused on his company's mission to bring clean and safe drinking water to people in developing countries. This year Ignite has partnered with Charity: Water, raising over \$26,000 in donations for clean water projects. Attendees will be invited to a "Water Walk," where they can experience firsthand the tremendous effort some people go through every day just to have clean water.

When asked why they decided to work with Charity: Water, Ignite Conference Chair Briana Weisinger stated, "it's important to look for ways the university can pay it forward through our actions and unique access to opportunity. We wanted to be purposeful about connecting the entrepreneurial space with the university's changemaking mission as a way to inspire entrepreneurs to give back in their own way."

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