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UC San Diego Launches Initiative to Assist Graduate Students in Starting Careers Outside of Academia



Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

In today's competitive job market, obtaining a graduate degree is only half the battle. To help students develop the leadership, communication and teamwork skills necessary to excel in the 21st century workplace, the University of California, San Diego is launching an initiative called Gradvantage. The program will offer a variety of professional development resources with a focus on preparing students for careers

outside of academia. Gradvantage kicks off with a career night for UC San Diego graduate students and postdoctoral scholars on Wednesday, Aug. 5 at 5 p.m. at the Career Services Center on campus.

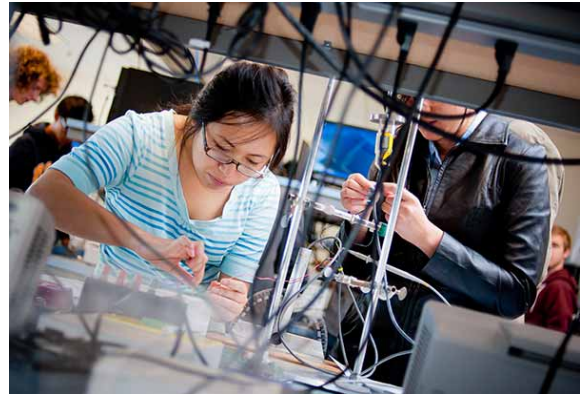
"UC San Diego graduate students are incredibly driven and talented, and they are our future leaders who will solve our world's most pressing challenges," said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. "With this initiative, we will better prepare our students and post-doctoral scholars for a range of careers in a changing economy."

The National Science Foundation estimates that 50 percent of doctoral recipients obtain an academic position as their first job. However, a highly skilled workforce is still in demand. The "Pathways Through Graduate School and Into Careers" report of the Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service projects that between 2010 and 2020, about 2.6 million new and replacement jobs are expected to require a graduate degree.

"We developed Gradvantage with input from industry leaders in San Diego and from our graduate student community," said Steve Cassedy, acting dean of the UC San Diego Graduate Division. "This program will help us to serve our students better and to train the kind of

academic and private sector leaders that our society needs.”

Gradvantage will educate master’s and doctoral students about career opportunities outside of academia, providing the training and skill development needed to secure those positions.



The initiative takes a four-prong approach:

- *Monthly Career Nights* – Featuring industry leaders speaking about job opportunities in their respective fields.
- *UC San Diego Extension Certificate* – Developed with input from companies such as Qualcomm, Balboa Park, Illumina and General Atomics, this new program focuses on leadership, teamwork and project management skills in a non-academic setting.
- *Communication Workshop* – A four-day intensive workshop to improve public speaking and communication skills, with techniques informed by the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science.
- *Career Services* – The UC San Diego Career Services Center will expand offerings of its career transition workshop series, designed to help doctoral students who are undecided about whether to pursue an academic career.

In addition to these efforts, Gradvantage will function as a one-stop resource for information about professional development opportunities available to graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.

Gradvantage is a partnership of several UC San Diego entities, including the Graduate Division, the Graduate Student Association, the Career Services Center, the Office of Research Affairs and UC San Diego Extension.

“We know that companies need the advanced technical training that our graduate students have,” said Mary Walshok, associate vice chancellor of public programs and dean of UC San Diego Extension. “The goal of this program is to provide them with the teamwork and leadership skills that companies today expect.”

Jonathan Monk, a doctoral student in chemical engineering and past president of the Graduate Student Association, said Gradvantage is a much-needed program that will give UC San Diego graduate students a competitive edge in a variety of careers.

“I’m excited for Gradvantage because it promises to teach me the soft skills that will complement my technical training as a graduate student here at UC San Diego,” Monk said. “Also, having all of the programs under the Gradvantage umbrella will keep me informed about new training opportunities and resources that fit my needs as they become available.”

For more information, visit the [Gradvantage](#) website or email gradvantage@ucsd.edu.

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