

Class Act: Graduating Seniors Aim to Raise \$30,000 for Scholarships at UC San Diego

The Class of 2011 leaves a legacy of pride, scholarship and philanthropy with the Senior Class Gift

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With graduation just over a month away, seniors at the University of California, San Diego are preparing to leave the university with a legacy. The Class of 2011 has set a goal to raise a record \$30,000 for scholarships as the 2011 Senior Class Gift. From now until the end of June, seniors will be challenging their classmates to make a gift of \$20.11 in a collective effort to help ensure that future students can experience the same opportunities that they have enjoyed at UC San Diego. The fundraising initiative will officially kick off April 26 with Grad Nite at the UC San Diego Bookstore, a special event for seniors featuring discounts on graduation items, a preview of senior events and alumni programs and services, as well as music, food and prizes.

Kevin Staight, a senior who has already pledged the \$20.11 contribution, knows firsthand the profound impact the Senior Class Gift can make. Staight graduated from high school in the bottom half of his class with a 2.9 GPA. When he didn't get into any of the colleges to which he applied, Staight enlisted in the military. He served four years with the Marine Corps and was deployed to Iraq twice. Through the experience, Staight discovered a purpose and direction for his life. He left the military with one goal: to learn Arabic and make a difference in the Middle East. To accomplish this, he knew a college education would be his first step. The Senior Class Gift Scholarship he received as an incoming freshman at UC San Diego made it possible for Staight to seize the opportunity to continue his education and work towards his goal.

"It was really important to me to pay for college on my own," said Staight. "I didn't want to slip back into my high school academic habits, and I knew that if I was paying for my education I would take it more seriously. Also, my parents really didn't have the means to support my education."

Five years later, Staight is nearly fluent in Arabic and will graduate this June with honors in both Linguistics and Management Science. He plans to pursue a career in international business to help improve economic opportunities for people in the Middle East.

"UC San Diego has given me so many opportunities," he said. "I am so appreciative of my education here and of the scholarships that have made it possible. UC San Diego took a chance on me when no other school would. That's why I'm pushing myself and working hard to achieve my goals and give back to UCSD."

The Senior Class Gift was established in 1991. Nicknamed the "never-ending gift," the tradition supports the Senior Class Gift Endowed Scholarship Fund. As the endowment grows with the contributions of each class, the scholarship opportunities for incoming UC San Diego students continue to grow as well. Last year, a record one quarter of the university's graduating class contributed to the Senior Class Gift, raising \$24,288.40.

"As graduating seniors, most of us don't have the capacity to give a large amount, but we still want to give back and make a difference before we leave the university," said Geoff Honda, a 2011 graduate and president of the UC San Diego Student Foundation, the student organization that oversees the Senior Class Gift. "We feel

that giving to scholarships to support future students is the best way that we can make a lasting impact at UC San Diego-especially in light of decreasing state support for higher education."

For the third year now, the UC San Diego Bookstore and UCSD Alumni are partnering with the Student Foundation's Senior Class Gift campaign to offer "Triton Pride Packs," special graduation packages that include graduation and alumni keepsakes, cap and gown rental, commencement fee and a \$20.11 donation to the Senior Class Gift. Triton Pride Packs are available at the UCSD Bookstore or online at <http://www.bookstore.ucsd.edu/clothing/pridepacks.htm>

To learn more about the Senior Class Gift, visit www.seniorclassgift.ucsd.edu

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