

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

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Four from UC San Diego Elected to American Academy of Arts and Sciences



Left to right, top: Paul Churchland and Vicki Grassian; bottom: Margaret Leinen and David Victor. Photos courtesy of UC San Diego

Four members of the University of California San Diego community, including three professors and one vice chancellor, have been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences—one of the oldest and most esteemed honorary societies in the nation.

Paul M. Churchland, Vicki H. Grassian, Margaret S. Leinen and David G. Victor are among the Academy's 2020 class of 276 members. They join fellow classmates who are artists, scholars, scientists and leaders in the public, non-profit and private sectors, including: singer/activist Joan C. Baez; immunologist Yasmine Belkaid; former Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.; author Ann Patchett and CEO and electrical engineer Lisa T. Su.

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences has honored exceptionally accomplished individuals and engaged them in advancing the public good for more than 240 years. Professor Walter Munk was the first UC San Diego faculty member elected to the Academy. Since then, 79 more have joined Munk in receiving this prestigious honor. "For a relatively young institution such as ours, this speaks volumes of the innovative and visionary nature of this university and our well-respected and accomplished faculty," said UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. "I am proud to see the career accomplishments of these four individuals being recognized on such a distinguished national platform."

According to Academy President David W. Oxtoby, the members of the class of 2020 have excelled in laboratories and lecture halls, amazed on concert stages and in surgical suites, and they have led in board rooms and courtrooms. "These new members are united by a place in history and by an opportunity to shape the future through the Academy's work to advance the public good," said Oxtoby.

Following is more information about each of UC San Diego's newest Academy members:

Paul Churchland, professor emeritus and former chair of the Department of Philosophy in the Division of Arts and Humanities, is an expert in the philosophy of science, philosophy of the mind, epistemology and cognitive science, philosophy of language and the history of philosophy. At UC San Diego, Churchland held the Valtz Family Endowed Chair in Philosophy from 1984 to 2010, taught in the Department of Cognitive Science, and is currently an affiliated faculty member of the Institute for Neural Computation. One of the most distinguished theorists in the field of the neurophilosophy and the philosophy of the mind, Churchland introduced and defended an influential view known as eliminative materialism, also known as eliminativism, in his book "Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind." The research published in his book "Matter and Consciousness," which presents an overview of the philosophical issues regarding the mind, is a leading text in philosophy and cognitive science education. Additional published work includes "Images of Science: Scientific Realism versus Constructive Empiricism," "The Engine of Reason, The Seat of the Soul: A Philosophical Journey into the Brain" and "Plato's Camera: How the Physical Brain Captures a Landscape of Abstract Universals."

Vicki Grassian is the Distinguished Chair of Physical Chemistry, who currently serves as the chair of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry in the Division of Physical Sciences and also as a faculty member within the Department of Nanoengineering and Scripps Institution of Oceanography. She is co-director of the Center for Aerosol Impacts on Chemistry of the Environment (CAICE). A leader in championing the inclusion of women and underrepresented groups in the sciences, Grassian focuses her research on the chemistry of complex environmental interfaces with projects on atmospheric aerosols, geochemical interfaces, indoor surfaces that impact indoor air quality and nanomaterials in the environment. She has pioneered laboratory studies of the reactivity and physicochemical properties of mineral dust and sea spray aerosols, providing a molecular understanding of its atmospheric chemistry and global impacts. Her studies on metal and metal oxide nanoparticles have shed light on the unique surface and environmental reactivity of these materials. Grassian is a Fellow of the American Chemical Society, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Physical Society. She has received numerous awards including the 2019 William H. Nichols Medal Award for her contributions to the chemistry of environmental interfaces and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry 2019 Distinguished Women in Chemistry or Chemical Engineering Award. Grassian was a distinguished member of the faculty at the University of Iowa before joining UC San Diego in 2016. She has more than 250 peer-reviewed publications in a wide range of journals.

Margaret Leinen is UC San Diego's vice chancellor for marine sciences, dean of the School of Marine Sciences and the director of Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Leinen is an award-winning oceanographer and an accomplished executive with extensive national and international experience in ocean science, global climate and environmental issues, federal research administration and more. Her research has focused on paleo-oceanography and paleo-climatology, specifically on ocean sediments and their relationship to global biogeochemical cycles and the history of Earth's ocean and climate. Leinen currently serves on the Executive Planning Group for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. From 2016-2018, Leinen served as a U.S. Science Envoy focusing on ocean science in Latin America, East Asia and the Pacific. She is past president of the American Geophysical Union, a member of the distinguished Leadership Council of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and past president of The Oceanography Society. Prior to joining UC San Diego, Leinen held academic leadership positions at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, a unit of Florida Atlantic University, and the University of Rhode Island. She also served as assistant director for Geosciences and Coordinator of Environmental Research and Education at the National Science Foundation.

David Victor is the Center for Global Transformation Endowed Chair in Innovation and Public Policy and professor of international relations at the School of Global Policy and Strategy. He serves as co-director of the Laboratory on International Law and Regulation and UC San Diego's Deep Decarbonization Initiative. Victor's research interests are in energy policy and energy markets—the future role of natural gas, electric power market reform and rural energy development. His interdisciplinary approach to climate change research, which integrates science, technology and policy, has made him one of world's top experts on gauging the globe's progress on addressing the issue, and what countries and industries need to do collectively and individually to reduce emissions. He is a leading contributor to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a United Nations-sanctioned international body with 195 country members. Victor is author of "Global Warming Gridlock," which explains why the world has not made much diplomatic progress on the problem of climate change while also exploring new strategies that would be more effective. Prior to joining UC San Diego, Victor served as director of the Program on Energy and Sustainable Development at Stanford University, where he was a professor at Stanford Law School and taught energy and environmental law. Earlier in his career, he also directed the science and technology program at the Council on Foreign Relations and led the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis. Victor also serves as an adjunct professor of climate, atmospheric science and physical oceanography at UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography. He is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and co-chairs the Cross-Brookings Initiative on Energy and Climate. In addition, he leads the community engagement panel for decommissioning of the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant.

The American Academy of Arts & Sciences was founded in 1780 by John Adams, John Hancock and others who believed the new republic should honor exceptionally accomplished individuals and engage them in advancing the public good. The 2020 members join the company of those elected before them, including Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton in the eighteenth century; Ralph Waldo Emerson and Maria Mitchell in the nineteenth; Robert Frost, Martha Graham, Margaret Mead, Milton Friedman and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the twentieth; and more recently, Antonin Scalia, Michael Bloomberg, John Lithgow, Judy Woodruff and Bryan Stevenson. International Honorary Members include Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill, Laurence Olivier, Mary Leakey, John Maynard Keynes, Akira Kurosawa and Nelson Mandela.

MEDIA CONTACT

Cynthia Dillon, 858-822-6673, cdillon@ucsd.edu

Christine Clark, 858-534-7618, ceclark@ucsd.edu

Lauren Fimbres Wood, 858-534-3626, lmwood@ucsd.edu

Anthony King, 858-822-7824, anthonyking@ucsd.edu

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