

## Celebrating Tomorrow's Leaders

*Commencement speakers encourage graduates to make positive change in the world*



**M**essages of hope, perseverance and giving back were delivered to thousands of members of UC San Diego's graduating class of 2018 who gathered Saturday morning for All Campus Commencement. The campus' next generation of groundbreakers heard from Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla, graduating student Lucero Camarena and alumna Kimberley Phillips Boehm, '82.

Speaking to a crowd of nearly 5,000 graduating students and thousands of their guests, Khosla started off by congratulating the class of 2018 and empowering the students to use their education to make the world a better place.

“You are the scholars who will tackle our current and future global societal challenges,” Khosla said. “And these challenges are complex – challenges like food security, climate change, disease.”

He encouraged students to embrace the message contained in the University of California seal: “Fiat Lux” or “Let There Be Light.”

“Light leads to enlightenment, the ideal combination of knowledge, wisdom, compassion, awareness and understanding,” he said. “As Socrates said: ‘Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.’”

In a complex, global society with ever-escalating challenges, he implored students to follow the example of faculty and researchers on campus: collaborate and work in diverse environments, as it is the key to innovation.

“The globe’s most pressing problems will not be solved by one person or one discipline,” he said. “They will take teams of people, diverse experts, who will come together to share knowledge, to offer perspective, to successfully collaborate to make these global challenges non-issues.”

He added, “Now more than ever, this light is needed. The global challenges I mentioned are only growing, compounding and becoming more complex.”

Access to education continues to be one of those pressing problems, Khosla said. “The unfortunate fact is that half of the families across our country cannot afford to send their children to college. This is unacceptable.”

He spoke about how UC San Diego is doing its part to change this statistic with its ongoing outreach efforts to underserved high schools and the establishment of the Chancellor’s Associates Scholarship program. Through its generous financial aid offerings and services to



*This year’s All Campus Commencement speakers (from left) Lucero Camarena, Kimberley Phillips Boehm and Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications*

students, the program continues to boost the number of first-generation and low-income students who graduate from UC San Diego.



*Chancellor Khosla addresses thousands of graduates and their families and friends*

Khosla spoke in place of Rep. John Lewis, due to UC-wide speaker boycott called by AFSCME Local 3299. However, throughout the talk, Khosla encouraged the crowd to emulate the civil rights icon, urging them to act out of compassion, stand by their principles and listen to their conscience.

Each student in the audience also received a copy of Lewis' book, "Building Bridges," as a graduation gift. Khosla concluded his speech with an excerpt from the book.

"Never let anyone—any person or any force—dampen, dim or diminish your light," he said. "Release the need to hate, to harbor division, and the enticement of revenge. Hold only love, only peace in your heart, knowing that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won."

### **Giving Voice to the Voiceless**

Lucero Felicita Camarena served as the student speaker and shared her personal story of struggle and success.



“Rewinding to my earliest memory, I remember expressing myself so femininely that my mother, in trying to keep me safe, told me ‘Mijo, you can’t do that,’ she said. “With much confusion I expressed – ‘why not?’ And in four words, she would conform to a lie and reveal my life’s greatest struggle: ‘Because you’re a boy.’”

Out of shame and fear of sharing her truth, Camarena did not speak again until age six.

“In that moment, I realized the fundamental truths at the exact same time; the world insisted I was an imposter, it claimed I was unworthy and it framed me as deviant.”

With her speech and literacy delayed, Camarena quickly fell behind in school.

“In first grade, while other kids were learning how to read, I was learning to say my first words. Our education system did not invest in me, in what they saw as ‘a lost cause.’”

She added, “With a single mom struggling financially, I had to work since childhood to help us stay afloat—I thought that was my purpose. But then, I got lucky.”

Camarena said a school counselor intervened, insisting that she was valued, smart and deserving of an education and the successes it ensues. This one mentor changed everything for Camarena.

“I soon became the first of my family to graduate high school, transfer to UC San Diego and now earn a college degree,” she said to a roaring applause.



*Student speaker Lucero Camarena speaks to her fellow graduates*



*Students toss their caps in the air*

Camarena’s talk was infused with compassion, as she instilled a sense of responsibility and compassion among the graduates.

“During my time researching and volunteering at the U.S./Mexico border, I encountered refugees and migrants whose stories exposed a cruel reality about our borders, our detention systems and our country’s indifference—hate even.”

She echoed the importance of helping underserved communities in our region.

“There are current and future legacies of resilience, and leadership that we are denying when we fail to advocate along with and uplift those oppressed by our borders,” she said.

With the goal of attending medical school with an undergraduate major in global health, Camarena plans to continue to push boundaries and make positive change as a physician-scientist.

She concluded her talk by giving thanks to the communities on campus that helped her and fellow students.

“Through this unlikely journey here, I would come to terms with my identity as a woman of trans experience,” she said. “Thank you to the people on this campus who have, in providing support for marginalized identities, embraced two indisputable facts: our experiences are valid, and we all deserve to be here.”

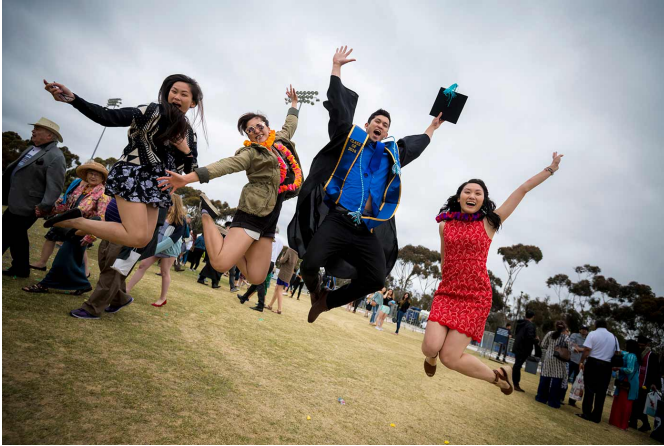
### **“Your generation will lead the way in creating a more just, equitable world”**

Alumni speaker Kimberley Phillips Boehm also uplifted the crowd with words of strength and encouragement. An award-winning author whose research and scholarship focuses on the history and culture of African Americans and U.S. workers, Boehm received a Bachelor’s degree in history from UC San Diego in 1982.

She earned a Master’s degree and Ph.D. from Yale University before leading a long career as a university academic and administrator. She served as a faculty member at the College of William and Mary. Boehm later became founding dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Brooklyn College-CUNY, then served as provost and dean of the faculty at Mills College.

Boehm began by acknowledging the diverse backgrounds the class of 2018 brought to the UC San Diego campus.

“Maybe you are first-generation college graduates, children of immigrants who crossed mountains, borders and seas,” she said. “Some of you are vets and have come from war. Some of you came to school with partners, maybe with children. You have lived whole lives before you stepped into the Revelle Humanities sequence or a chemistry class in Urey Hall.”



*Graduates celebrate graduating from one of the top universities in the nation*

She also spoke of the challenges this generation continues to face.

“As we celebrate your glorious graduation, I am mindful, too, how your generation has been shaped by environmental calamities, intrusive technology, interminable wars, political upheaval, and financial meltdowns,” Boehm said. “Some of these events have been debacles of our own making.”

However, Boehm said these challenges are also opportunities, and she spoke of how she is inspired by the ideals of this generation,

which continue to right the wrongs of the 21st century.

“You are also a generation that leads the way to making our environment more sustainable, how we live, love and learn more diverse,” she said. “You lead movements to make our democracy stronger and more equitable. You are more inventive, creative and entrepreneurial than any other previous generation. Thank you for being leaders.”

For more information on UC San Diego’s All Campus Commencement and to view a recording of the event, click [here](#).