

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

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Coalition of Graduate Programs Support Campus Commitment to Recruiting Diverse Students



Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

Enhanced presence at SACNAS national conference helps UC San Diego reach out to an increased number of Hispanic and Native American students

To support UC San Diego's commitment to increase the diversity of graduate students, a coalition of campus programs debuted an enhanced recruiting presence at the Society for Advancement of Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in

UC San Diego

Graduate Division

Science (SACNAS) national conference in Los Angeles Oct. 16-18. The largest STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) diversity event in the country, the 2014 conference brought together more than 3,800 students and science professionals of color for a weekend of cutting-edge science, mentoring, networking and professional development.

Over 600 professionals from the nation's top institutions come annually to the SACNAS national conference to recruit students for graduate school, internships, fellowships and career positions. To be more competitive, UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla provided seed funding for a higher level of conference sponsorship for three years—including increased marketing, signage, booth space and more



—with the caveat that campus graduate programs would also invest in the enhanced presence at this premier recruiting event. UC San Diego programs providing support included Biological Sciences, Biomedical Sciences, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Jacobs School of Engineering, Neurosciences, and Chemistry and Biochemistry, as well as the Graduate Division.

“Graduate students are incredibly important to universities. They fuel research, mentor undergraduates, attract top faculty to campus and enrich the overall intellectual climate of the university,” said Chancellor Khosla. “UC San Diego is committed to fostering the next generation of diverse scientists. Our greater visibility at the SACNAS conference helps us continue efforts to educate high-potential graduate students representing different socioeconomic backgrounds.”

UC San Diego's involvement with the SACNAS conference extended beyond the updated booth and marketing efforts. Over 40 undergraduate and graduate students attended, and some were recognized for outstanding research. Faculty from our graduate programs participated as speakers, exhibitors and judges; program staff also attended. UC San Diego's new SACNAS chapter, formed by students, was also officially recognized at the conference.

Mark Lawson, professor of reproductive medicine and director of student programs for the Center of Investigations of Health and Educational Disparities at UC San Diego, was a key driver in bringing together Chancellor Khosla and various graduate programs to increase the campus's visibility at the conference. “SACNAS is the premier recruiting meeting for STEM

graduate programs,” he said. “In past years, UC San Diego was overshadowed by other schools, including our sister campuses, that hurt our competitiveness—there are top students there, and we want them.”



Lawson added, “I am one of only a few minority faculty at UC San Diego, and we want to see more someday. Increased diversity is a pillar of our new Strategic Plan, and it is important that we take up that challenge and create that change. Our sponsorship and enhanced presence at this year’s SACNAS conference, and resulting interest in our graduate programs from attendees, is exciting.”

The SACNAS conference also offered the campus an opportunity to launch the new “Graduate Division” name and brand. Formerly the Office of Graduate Studies, the name was selected to be consistent with fellow UC campuses and underscore the importance of graduate education at UC San Diego. The Graduate Division coordinated the coalition of campus programs at the conference.

“Given the campus’s goal of increasing our graduate student population, the conference seemed like the perfect time to share the refreshed mission and vision of our team,” said Kim Barrett, dean of the Graduate Division. “We want to ensure that the Graduate Division provides the resources and services needed to uphold excellence in graduate education at UC San Diego.”

The Graduate Division is the central resource for all things related to graduate education, providing support for staff, faculty and students at every step in a graduate student’s career. The rebranding process, which was based on in-depth interviews with campus constituents, includes changes to ensure that the Graduate Division is accessible and supportive for campus members. As part of the process, a new website is currently being developed to offer a more user-friendly and helpful experience.



Outreach to prospective graduate students at conferences like SACNAS is just one of the ways that the division supports graduate education at UC San Diego. In addition to facilitating administrative requirements, the Graduate Division offers services to enhance the quality of the graduate student experience on campus, such as professional development programs and opportunities to network with students across campus. Dean Barrett also collaborates with faculty members who would like to develop new graduate programs, helping to navigate the process and provide insight into how new programs fit into the broader university landscape.

To learn more about the Graduate Division, visit grad.ucsd.edu