Defining the Future of the Public Research University

The University of California, San Diego is a student-centered, research-focused, service-oriented public institution that provides opportunity for all. Recognized as one of the top 15 research universities worldwide, a culture of collaboration sparks discoveries that advance society and drive economic impact. Our students, who learn from Nobel laureates, MacArthur fellows and National Academy members, are committed to public service. For the sixth consecutive year, UC San Diego has been ranked first in the nation based on research, civic engagement and social mobility. We are one campus with multiple pillars of excellence, a top ten public university that is transforming lives, shaping new disciplines and advancing the frontiers of knowledge.

By the Numbers

#1 UC San Diego enrolls the largest number of students among colleges and universities in San Diego County.
33,735 Total campus enrollment (as of Fall 2015)
78,056 Freshman applicants for 2015
4.14 Admitted freshman average high school GPA
$4.3 billion Fiscal year 2014-15 revenues; 22% of this total is revenue from contracts and grants, most of which is from the federal government for research.
8% Total educational appropriations from the State of California; yet a small investment in UC San Diego results in significant impact to the region’s economy, workforce and businesses.
59% Percentage of undergraduate students who received financial aid in the 2014-15 academic year.
$1.012 billion Research funding secured during fiscal year 2014-15 to support research in all fields. One of the nation’s 10 largest centers for science, engineering and medicine, UC San Diego’s research funding has surpassed $1 billion four times in the past six years.
7,700 Number of degrees conferred in 2015
73% received a bachelor’s degree 51% men
27% received a graduate degree 49% women
170,000+ Number of UC San Diego alumni worldwide; 26% live in San Diego County, contributing income, payroll, property and sales taxes to the region
67.7% live in California, with the highest percentage (26%) in San Diego
6.9% live in the United States (outside of California)
<1% live abroad
24.9% address data unavailable
16 Number of Nobel laureates who have taught on campus
161 Memberships held by current and emeriti faculty, including Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla, in one or more of the three prestigious National Academies; the National Academy of Sciences (84), National Academy of Engineering (27) and National Academy of Medicine (50).

Economic Impact

650+ Companies launched by and/or utilizing technology produced by UC San Diego faculty, staff and alumni, including many San Diego biotech and technology firms.
200+ Number of active local UC San Diego-related companies.
3,000 At fiscal year-end 2014, the UC San Diego Office for Innovation and Commercialization managed more than 3,000 innovations and approximately 439 active license agreements. During this period, 16 new start-up companies were formed with licensed UC San Diego technology.
Top Patent Producer According to the 2014 UC Technology Commercialization Report, University of California researchers submitted 1,769 inventions—an average of nearly five a day, 365 days a year. UC San Diego generated 233 U.S. and foreign patents and was top among all UCs in terms of total active inventions (3,009), total active U.S. patents (859) and total active foreign patents (886).
$32.4 billion Total estimated annual sales of active UC San Diego-related companies in San Diego County, including those utilizing licensed technology.
The amount of wages that our region’s algae biotechnology industry generates each year according to a 2014 study conducted by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). The industry, which is integrally tied to collaborative research drive by UC San Diego’s California Center for Algae Biotechnology, has fostered approximately 1,020 jobs, contributing over $175 million to the San Diego economy.

Direct jobs attributable to active UC San Diego-related companies.

Our campus is the largest employer based in San Diego County.

Total number of full and part-time academic and staff employees at UC San Diego (as of June 2015).

UC San Diego is ranked 26th among the top 50 universities in the world for producing venture capital-backed business founders. The ranking by Pitchbook Data, Inc., a venture capital data provider, is based on funding acquired between 2009 and 2014 – during that time, 91 UC San Diego alumni entrepreneurs received $740 million in investment capital.

Private Support

UC San Diego celebrated a record-breaking year of private support. The campus raised 20% more during fiscal year 2014-15 compared to the previous year, with over 43,000 gifts and grants.

Total combined endowment for the campus as of fiscal year 2014-15, managed by the UC San Diego Foundation and the UC Regents.

Global and National Rankings

Campus Accolades

In 2015, for the sixth consecutive year, UC San Diego is ranked 1st in the nation by the Washington Monthly's College Guide based on the positive impact the university has had on the country in terms of enabling social mobility, research productivity and civic engagement.

The Preuss School UCSD, a charter middle and high school located on the campus of UC San Diego, was named the 9th best high school in the nation in U.S. News and World Report's 2016 "Best High Schools" list.

UC San Diego was ranked 6th in the nation and 13th in the world for total research output by the journal Nature in their 2014 index. The university also currently ranks 5th in total research and development expenditures by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

For more than a decade, U.S. News & World Report has included UC San Diego among the nation’s top 10 public universities. UC San Diego ranked 9th best public university in the nation.

UC San Diego was named 16th best research university in the world by the Centre for Science and Technology Studies of Leiden University’s 2015 list that measured scientific impact of universities worldwide.

In the prestigious 2015 Academic Ranking of World Universities released by the Center for World-Class Universities at Shanghai Jiao Tong, UC San Diego was ranked the 14th best university in world for the third consecutive year. U.S. News and World Report named UC San Diego the 19th best university in the world in 2015 for research, global and regional reputation, international collaboration as well as number of highly-cited papers and doctorates awarded. In addition, the Center for the World University Rankings named UC San Diego the 21st best university in the world, 16th in the U.S. and fourth best public university in the nation in 2015.

UC San Diego was recognized as 1st among San Diego’s adult hospitals and 5th in California by the 2015-2016 U.S. News & World Report “America’s Best Hospitals” issue, and ranked among the best in the nation in twelve specialty areas.

The UC San Diego School of Medicine was ranked 14th in research-intensive programs among 128 medical schools with the primary care program is ranked 38th out of 114 medical schools in the U.S. News and World Report Best Graduate Schools Guidebook, 2015 Edition.

More than 100 physicians from UC San Diego Health System were named “Top Docs” in the 2015 San Diego Magazine “Physicians of Exceptional Excellence” annual survey.

In 2015, the UC San Diego Medical Center was named among the top 100 hospitals in four categories by Becker's Hospital Review, including “100 Great Hospitals in America,” along with top programs in heart and oncology as well as neurosurgery and spine.
In 2012, UC San Diego Medical Center-Hillcrest became one of five facilities in the country—and the only center in San Diego County—to be recognized as one of the first Comprehensive Stroke Centers, the newest level of certification for advanced stroke care awarded by The Joint Commission.

Unmatched Value

10th Best Earning Potential Graduates of UC San Diego were ranked 10th for salary earning potential in the 2013-2014 PayScale.com report measuring top state schools across the nation. UC San Diego was also ranked 4th best public university for its return on investment for alumni who are California residents in the 2012 College Salary Report by Payscale.com.

15th Best Return on Investment The 2015 college salary report by Payscale.com ranks UC San Diego the 15th best public university for its return on investment (ROI)—what students pay to attend versus what they get back in lifetime earnings—for alumni who are California residents.

20th Best Value Public University in the Nation In 2015, Kiplinger’s Personal Finance named UC San Diego the 20th best value public university in the nation based on its academic quality and affordability, including high four-year graduation rates, low average student debt at graduation, the availability of financial aid and overall great value.

Among “Best Bang for Buck” In 2015, UC San Diego was named 12th in the West in Washington Monthly’s new book, “The Other College Guide,” which ranks schools with the best value based on net price, graduation rates and whether alumni earn enough to pay off their loans.

Graduate Programs

Graduate Programs Ranked Top 25 in the Nation Graduate programs at UC San Diego continue to rank highly as noted in the 2017 “America’s Best Graduate Schools” guidebook, released by U.S. News Media Group, publishers of U.S. News & World Report.

- Fine Arts: time-based media/new media (3rd), fine arts (13th)
- Engineering: biomedical/bioengineering (4th), best engineering school (17th)
- Health Sciences: drug and alcohol abuse research (10th), School of Medicine research program (18th), primary care (21st), pharmacy (25th)
- Sciences: neuroscience/neurobiology (2nd), discrete mathematics and combinations (3rd), plasma physics (7th), biochemistry (10th), computer science systems (11th), condensed matter physics (13th), biological sciences (14th), computer science theory (14th), computer science (15th), physics (16th), earth sciences (16th), chemistry (21st), mathematics (23rd)
- Social Sciences and Humanities: behavioral neuroscience (1st), cognitive psychology (3rd), econometrics (4th), international politics (5th), political science (8th), public finance (9th), comparative politics (11th), comparative politics (11th), microeconomics (12th), Latin American history (12th), American politics (14th), psychology (14th), economics (15th)

#1 Executive MBA Program in San Diego In 2015, UC San Diego’s Rady School of Management Executive MBA program was ranked 1st in San Diego, 2nd in California and 33rd globally by The Economist.

International Relations Programs Top World Rankings Foreign Policy Magazine’s 2015 rankings named UC San Diego’s undergraduate international relations program and master’s program for policy careers in international relations 13th best in the world.

Additional Rankings

World’s Most Influential Scientific Minds Twenty-two UC San Diego scientists and physicians are among the 2015 listing of “The World’s Most Influential Scientific Minds,” an annual compendium of “Highly Cited Researchers” by Thomson Reuters, a multinational mass media and information company.

Top School for Peace Corps Service UC San Diego ranks 14th nationally on the Peace Corps’ 2016 list of “Top Colleges and Universities,” marking the sixth consecutive year that UC San Diego has been named in the top 15. There are currently 36 UC San Diego undergraduate alumni serving as Peace Corps volunteers; in total, the campus has produced 807 volunteers.

4th in the Nation for Economic Diversity The New York Times named UC San Diego 4th in the nation for providing access to low-income students in their 2015 College Access Index. The report assesses economic diversity based on the number of and graduation rate of students who receive Pell grants and the net cost, after financial aid, colleges charge both low and middle-income students.

Top 10 LGBTQ-Friendly University UC San Diego has been named 9th among the top 23 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning (LGBTQ) friendly universities in the nation, according to a new 2015-16 report by Affordable Colleges Online—a website that helps students and their families identify affordable, higher educational opportunities.

Top 10 “Coolest Schools” Sierra magazine named UC San Diego the 7th “Coolest School” in the nation in 2015 for displaying a deep and thorough commitment to protecting the environment, addressing climate issues and encouraging environmental responsibility.
Doctoral Programs Ranked 1st in the Nation

Three doctoral programs offered at UC San Diego—Biological Sciences, Bioengineering and Scripps Institution of Oceanography—are ranked 1st in the nation according to the results of the 2010 National Research Council (NRC) Data-Based Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs, conducted every ten years. Additionally, biomedical sciences was ranked 2nd, neurosciences 4th and linguistics 9th in the nation, while 60% of all UC San Diego’s doctoral programs are among the top 20 in their fields nationwide.

Top Teach For America Contributor

UC San Diego was named 12th in the nation among schools contributing the most graduates to Teach For America in 2015. Corps members commit to teaching for at least two years in under-resourced schools and become lifelong leaders in the pursuit of educational equity.

Top Academic Surfing School in the Nation

In 2015 UC San Diego was ranked 2nd nationally among “Top Academic Surf Schools” and “Core Surf Schools” by The Inertia, a website that focuses on surfing news and lifestyle. Criteria included average incoming freshman GPA and SAT scores as well as access to high quality surf. UC San Diego’s surf team has won six national championships.

Active Faculty Honors

Nobel Prize

Harry Markowitz, economics (1990); Mario J. Molina, chemistry (1995); Roger Tsien, chemistry (2008). The 2007 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to former vice president Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whose roster of researchers lists nearly two dozen Scripps Institution of Oceanography scientists including Mario Molina, Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Richard Somerville and Lynne Talley.

Fields Medal

Michael Freedman, mathematics (1986); and Efim Zelmanov, mathematics (1994).

National Medal of Science

Margaret Burbidge, astrophysics (1983); Walter Munk, geophysics (1983); Craig Venter, pharmacology (2009); Marye Anne Fox, chemistry (2010); and Shu Chien, bioengineering (2011).

Presidential Medal of Freedom

Roger Reynolds, music (1989); and Rae Armantrout, poetry (2010).

Kyoto Prize

Walter Munk, geophysics (1999).

MacArthur Fellows

Edwin Hutchins, cognitive science (1985); Nancy D. Cartwright, philosophy (1993); Kun-Liang Guan, pharmacology (1998); Guillermo Algaze, anthropology (2003); and Carol Padden, communication (2010).

Tony Award


Academy Award

Henrik Wann Jensen, computer science and engineering (2004).

Wolf Prize

George Feher, chemistry (2007); and Roger Tsien, medicine (2008).

Notable Former Faculty and Alumni Honors

Nobel Prize

Harold Urey, chemistry (1934); Linus Pauling, chemistry, (1954); Francis Crick, physiology or medicine (1962); Linus Pauling, peace, (1962); Maria Goeppert-Mayer, physics (1963); Robert Holley, physiology or medicine, (1968); Hannes Alfven, physics, (1970); George Palade, physiology or medicine, (1974); Renato Dulbecco, physiology or medicine, (1975); Roger Guillemin, physiology or medicine, (1977); Susumu Tonegawa, '88, physiology or medicine, (1987); Paul Crutzen, chemistry, (1995); Sydney Brenner, physiology or medicine, (2002); Robert Engle, economic sciences, (2003); Olive Granger, economic sciences, (2003); and Bruce Beutler, '76, physiology or medicine, (2011).

National Medal of Science

Harold Urey, chemistry (1964); Linus Pauling, chemistry, (1976); Roger Guillemin, medicine (1976); Margaret Burbidge, astrophysics (1983); George Palade, medicine (1986); Michael Freedman, mathematics (1987); Roger Revelle, oceanography (1990); Marshall Rosenbluth, physics (1997); Yuan-Cheng Fung, bioengineering (2000); Charles David Keeling, geosciences (2001); Andrew Viterbi, electrical and computer engineering (2007); and Craig Venter, '72, pharmacology (2008).

National Medal of Technology and Innovation

Irwin Jacobs (1994).

Pulitzer Prize


Balzan Prize

Roger Driscoll, political science (1986); Roger Revelle, oceanography (1986); James Freeman Gilbert, geophysics (1990); Wolfgang Berger, geosciences (1993); and Harmon Craig, geophysics (1998).

Tony Award


Emmy Award


Presidential Medal of Freedom

Sally Ride (2013).
Fields Medal
Michael Freedman, mathematics (1986); and Shing-Tung Yau, mathematics (1982).

MacArthur Fellows
Elizabeth Bates, cognitive science (1983); Ramon Arturo Gutierrez, ethnic studies (1983); Richard Schoen, mathematics (1983); Michael Freedman, mathematics (1984); Arnold Mandell, psychiatry (1984); Shing-Tung Yau, mathematics (1985); David Rumelhart, psychology (1987); Michael Schudson, communications (1990); Patricia Smith Churchland, philosophy (1991); Russell Lande, biology (1997); George Lewis, music (2002); and Emily Ann Thompson, history (2005); and Carrie Mae Weems, photography and video art (2013).

Nebula Award

See the “UC San Diego Campus Profile” at http://ucpa.ucsd.edu/resources-and-information/campus-profile/ for updated rankings, facts and statistics. This list is not comprehensive. We make every effort to keep these listings current and accurate. Please notify marcom@ucsd.edu if you notice a discrepancy. Revised 04 22 2016