

UC San Diego

PREUSSline

SUMMER 2020

GIVING BACK

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WE'VE GONE DIGITAL!

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FOCUS ON



The Preuss School UC San Diego was recognized as the No. 1 high school in San Diego County.

TOP OF THE CHARTS

The Preuss School UC San Diego was recently recognized as the No. 1 high school in San Diego County by U.S. News & World Report in their 2020 list of Best High Schools. The ranking also placed The Preuss School No. 9 in California among 1,612 schools and No. 87 nationally among 17,792 schools across the U.S with an overall score of 99.51 out of 100.

The ranking was calculated by the number of seniors who enrolled in and passed an advanced placement (AP) exam—100 percent of seniors at Preuss completed

a course, and 85 percent earned a passing score. In addition, the report's methodology also assessed graduation rate (96 percent at Preuss) and math and reading performance rank.

"We are thrilled to be named the best high school in San Diego and among the top 10 in California," said Executive Director Dr. Griffith. "From the first day they arrive, we tell our scholars that they are going to college. Our educators help grow their talent and ambition through caring mentorship, leading them to achieve a bright future."

WELCOME PRINCIPAL MATTHEW STEITZ



Matthew Steitz

After a nationwide search, Matthew Steitz, EdD, has been appointed principal of The Preuss School UC San Diego, effective July 1, 2020. Most recently, Steitz served as assistant superintendent of Educational Excellence for the Vista Unified School District. In his new role, he will work closely with Helen V. Griffith, EdD, executive director of The Preuss School, to build the capacity of scholars, faculty, staff, parents and community partners.

For Steitz, the role of an educational leader is to create a culture where every person is valued and their individual strengths are recognized and developed. Mutual respect, trust, professionalism and continuous school improvement guide his daily work and keep him focused on exemplary scholar outcomes. "I am thrilled to join The Preuss School team, ready to support the school's history of transformational success, especially at a time when our educational system is challenged by a worldwide pandemic," said Steitz.

CLASS OF 2020 CELEBRATIONS GO VIRTUAL

Seniors at The Preuss School experienced an unpredictable conclusion to their last semester, but they met the challenging circumstances with poise and resilience. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, classes transitioned to remote learning and commencement celebrations pivoted to virtual festivities.

Faculty, staff and leadership put their heart into making the untraditional celebrations as memorable as possible. On May 22, a special caravan was held to announce the 2020 valedictorian and salutatorian graduation honors. Each honoree—which included valedictorian Mayerling Colin and four salutatorians Jackie Le, Jason Nguyen, Kevin Nguyen and Quang Vo—received a banner to showcase in their front yard as well as a medal from their advisory teacher. Then, a parade of faculty and staff drove by in their decorated vehicles, honking and waving banners to offer their congratulations.

A few weeks later, a virtual commencement was held on June 18 to honor the accomplishments of 106 graduating seniors. The ceremony included a keynote address from Mary Daly, PhD, president and CEO

of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, as well as recognition of the graduates, conferral of diplomas and a traditional tassel turn.

The Preuss School Class of 2020 shines academically with an average GPA of 4.09 and a total of \$1.3 million awarded in college grants and scholarships—including a Gates Millennium Scholarship and QuestBridge Scholarship, both covering all college expenses. This year scholars were accepted to over 70 universities across the nation, including UC San Diego, Yale University, Trinity College, UCLA and Cornell University.



A special caravan was held to announce valedictorian and salutatorian graduation honors.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE



It is my belief that those who experience great challenge will in turn experience great triumph. The Preuss School Class of 2020 is a remarkable group that will achieve great heights because

of their ability to persevere and rise above this tumultuous twist to their final high school semester.

Despite the challenges, each of our graduating seniors is aligned on a pathway to success in college and career. They are on their way to UC San Diego, Yale University, UCLA, Cornell University and other prestigious institutions.

Many of their dreams involve helping others or improving equity. Some examples include starting a nonprofit organization to help first-generation students succeed, becoming a pediatric surgeon to reduce health disparities and creating new neurotechnologies for autoimmune diseases as a biomedical

engineer. I have no doubt that each will transform their communities.

Commencement this year brought a full spectrum of emotions—joyous excitement for our 106 graduating seniors who achieved seven years of growth and hard work, as well as immense disappointment that the COVID-19 pandemic had stalled in-person celebrations of this momentous occasion.

I am incredibly proud of all of our scholars, staff and faculty members at The Preuss School who have persevered with strength and compassion. On March 16, with heavy hearts, we transitioned to remote instruction in accordance with county and state directives to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. Our faculty quickly mobilized to ensure that there was no gap in learning. The remote structure incorporates one-on-one time between faculty and scholars over Zoom, live instruction sessions, small group study, self-paced work and tutoring.

To continue to ensure the safety of our students, summer school will also be delivered remotely. This will include a virtual orientation session for all scholars who will be attending so that they can meet

their teachers, understand expectations and ask questions.

Our plan is to return to campus on August 10, offering a blended approach to learning that will include a mix of in-person instruction and remote learning. We are currently determining what this will look like, as we are guided by the recommendations from the medical professionals at UC San Diego Health and the UC San Diego Return to Learn Program.

Throughout these uncertain times, our message to scholars has been one of unity. Together, we will get to the other side of this and see a brighter day. The Preuss School family is tight knit, bolstering scholar success even during the most trying of circumstances.

I hope you and your family have remained safe and well during this time.

Yours in service,

DR. HELEN V. GRIFFITH
Executive Director
The Preuss School UC San Diego

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ARTS

STUDENT STORIES
CAPTURED IN A VIBRANT
MURAL AT UC SAN DIEGO

A once sleepy courtyard in the residential neighborhood of Thurgood Marshall College at UC San Diego has been transformed by a splash of color. A new mural—created in January—spans four walls and explores social justice issues, the activists that have changed the course of history and the potential of current students to continue the progress made.

The faces, experiences and hope depicted come straight from the hearts of students. The collaborative artwork came to life as a partnership between studio art students at The Preuss School and undergraduates at Thurgood Marshall College. The mural features themes that are important to students, including honoring the Kumeyaay people, LGBTQIA+ rights, immigration experiences and more.

Each scholar had the opportunity to contribute their passions. For Preuss School junior Julian Hernandez, it was music. "I decided to draw a guitar because if I grow up to become a music teacher, I want to teach low-income communities like the one I live in so they can be motivated to play music and get over the gangs and drugs."

Earlier this year, Preuss School students took part in a series of art workshops with community artist Jay Schlossberg-Cohen. The Baltimore-based artist travels around the country to facilitate mural projects rooted in community voices to help heal and empower those involved. In the workshops, students journeyed through their own family histories, examined future goals and envisioned the change they want to make. Their collective ideas were combined by Schlossberg-Cohen to form the larger mural.

"I teach that it is not about one's ability to paint, but one's ability to think," explained Schlossberg-Cohen, who became connected to the campus through a friendship with



The Preuss School students painting mural

Cecil Lytle, one of the founders of The Preuss School and former provost of Thurgood Marshall College. "The mural-making experience is designed to increase student self-expression, self-concept and self-awareness as community leaders."

ALUMNI UPDATES



MARLENE LLEVA '07

As a first-generation college student raised by immigrant parents in San Diego, Marlene Lleva has always wanted to address

the social and economic barriers faced by marginalized communities. She earned a bachelor's degree in international studies from UCLA and a master's degree in international education from Columbia University Teachers College. Lleva has since devoted her career to advocating for clients at a legal services nonprofit, protecting the rights of youth experiencing homelessness in New York City, particularly LGBTQIA+ youth.



THUY WONG '08

Thuy Wong's experience at Preuss taught her initiative and helped her feel more comfortable and prepared for a university environment.

She graduated from Pomona College with a degree in environmental analysis and chemistry and received a master's in public health, specializing in public health and promotion, from USC. Utilizing her skills in public health education, Wong found herself drawn to working with charter schools. She currently works as president and CEO of CharterSAFE, where she helps schools manage their risks so they can focus school resources on empowering students through education.

BULLETIN BOARD!



The Preuss School was recognized at the 25th annual UC San Diego Inclusive Excellence Awards for their exemplary commitment to diversity.



Qualcomm Inc. recently donated 300 laptops to The Preuss School so that students could continue learning remotely, following social distancing guidelines.



Thank you to California Coast Credit Union for contributing \$5,000 toward our virtual commencement ceremony.



Although the pandemic necessitated a postponement of the annual Preuss Promise benefit, we will be sharing an update soon on our upcoming plans.

STANDOUT SENIORS



Gicel Abraham

Virtual Diplomat

Model United Nations (MUN) is a club that brings together scholars from multiple institutions to learn about diplomacy, international relations and the United Nations organization. On April 25, Preuss senior Gicel Abraham helped to lead the inaugural Torrey & Triton Virtual Model United Nations Conference, a partnership between The Preuss School and La Jolla Country Day School. Over 100 student delegates participated, tuning in to the Zoom video conference from Los Angeles, Chicago and as far as Monterrey, Mexico. With the profit they garnered from the event, the scholars provided \$500 to Feeding San Diego to support their efforts during the pandemic. This fall, Abraham hopes to continue with MUN at UC Davis, where she will major in mechanical engineering.



Eloge Iradukunda

Soccer Superstar

In March, senior Eloge Iradukunda was voted one of the top 12 boy's soccer players in San Diego out of 2,000 players as part of the All CIF First-Team—the first time a member of boy's soccer from The Preuss School has been awarded this honor. A dynamic playmaker, he helped his team win three straight league championships while making the Principal's Honor Roll. In the fall, Iradukunda will become the second scholar-athlete in Preuss history to be selected to play in NCAA Division I as part of the San Diego State University Men's Soccer team. "He was one of the first players I went to see when I arrived in San Diego," said SDSU Coach Ryan Hopkins in a press release. "On the field, he is an exciting attacking player that combines blistering pace with an ability to score goals."



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