

Schools and Business Community Create Key Synergy for Region

Economic Trends: Key Universities

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San Diego — The region's largest university, the University of California, San Diego, heads into 2017 on the heels of a bombshell announcement.

By 2020 or 2021, UC San Diego says it will end San Diego's run as the only major metropolitan area in the country without a major university presence in its city center by opening a 66,000-square-foot "Innovative Cultural and Education Hub."

The outpost will be situated within a \$277 million, mixed-use project being built at Park Boulevard and Market Street. The announcement came after more than three years of encouragement from civic and education leaders, who believe the presence of a major university or tech company will catalyze economic growth in the area.

UC San Diego is also expanding internationally, linking its researchers with their counterparts in other countries. The university opened an office this year in downtown Tokyo.

If the downtown project goes according to schedule, the space could one day be used by some of the more than 88,000 high school students who applied this year to attend the research university as freshmen in 2017.

The total number of applications was up from 84,200 submitted in the previous admissions cycle. Among the University of California campuses, the number of applications was the second-highest, following UCLA.

Bigger Footprint

Roughly 10 miles southeast of the La Jolla school, as the crow flies, more than 82,000 students applied to enroll at San Diego State University next year, about the same number as the prior year.

Of those applications, 59,920 were from prospective freshman and 22,755 were from undergraduates looking to transfer. The prior year, SDSU fielded 82,823 applications, 59,977 from high school students and 22,846 from transfer applicants.

In years to come, the university may occupy a bigger footprint: University President Elliot Hirshman said late last year that SDSU may one day expand into Mission Valley.

Within SDSU, the College of Business Administration had a big year, with local philanthropist and San Diego Padres Executive Chairman Ron Fowler, with his wife Alexis, pledging a \$25 million endowment gift to the school, the largest donation in SDSU's 119-year history. The university also launched an online undergraduate business administration degree program.

Many SDSU graduates remain in the San Diego region; the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. has estimated that one of every seven San Diegans with a college degree earned it at State.

STEM Program

Another of the region's key universities, the University of San Diego, was also the beneficiary of local philanthropy this year.

The Noyce Foundation, created by the late Intel co-founder Robert Noyce, donated \$12 million to the university's School of Leadership and Education Services to fund STEM Next, a program that aims to prepare students, especially girls and those from underserved areas, for scientific careers.

USD said it expects to field more than 14,750 applications for 2017, three percent over the number received for the 2016 school year. The campus's undergrad enrollment remained stable this year; as in recent years, more than 5,000 students attended.

Over at CSU San Marcos, the university's new \$11.4 million athletics facility made its debut in September.

It also received support from the community for its effort, with a \$50,000 pledge from entrepreneur and former CEO Emilie Hersh and her husband, Mark, a longtime employee at Carlsbad-based ViaSat Inc., for scholarships and other initiatives at the Cal State San Marcos College of Business Administration.

It's a virtuous cycle that seems likely to continue into 2017: As San Diego's key universities bolster the local economy, the institutions are in turn supported by locals impressed by their successes.