



WHO WE ARE

UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO
BRAND GUIDELINES

OUR STORY

A Brand Must Have an Origin Story

Popular perception is that the opening chapter of the University of San Diego was written on a brisk early winter afternoon in December 1949, when local dignitaries joined Bishop Charles Francis Buddy and Mother Rosalie Clifton Hill, RSCJ, for a groundbreaking ceremony atop a wind-swept mesa overlooking the burgeoning San Diego cityscape. However, USD's true beginnings can be traced back to 1937, when Bishop Buddy assumed stewardship of the Catholic Diocese of San Diego. It was a bleak period in U.S. history, as the economy toiled under the oppressive weight of the Great Depression. Despite the prevailing poverty, the energetic bishop was already looking ahead to better times.

On his way from Missouri to San Diego, Bishop Buddy made a stop in San Francisco to counsel with Mother Hill, a member of the Religious Order of the Sacred Heart. His hope was to work in concert with Mother Hill to create separate Catholic colleges for men and women in San Diego. Mother Hill eagerly accepted Bishop Buddy's offer.

World War II intervened, but the duo remained undeterred. In 1949, the State of California granted official charters to the San Diego College for Men, the San Diego College for Women and the School of Law.

The two founders chose a site and named it Alcalá Park, inspired by the University of Alcalá, located in Alcalá de Henares, in Spain, where St. Didacus, known here as San Diego, spent much of his life.



BUILDING A BRAND

A Brand Must Have a Heart and Soul

At the heart of everything, is USD's determination to prevail as an educational institution that serves society and the human condition. That's why USD created a signature student experience. These are just some of the ways the University of San Diego speaks to people — not just in words, but in actions.

As a Catholic university, USD's brand has a soul. Mother Hill understood faith as a light, which illuminates our search for ultimate meaning and purpose. At USD, students develop an awareness of the needs of others and aren't afraid to confront the most urgent challenges facing our world today.



BUILDING A BRAND

HIGH-CALIBER FACULTY

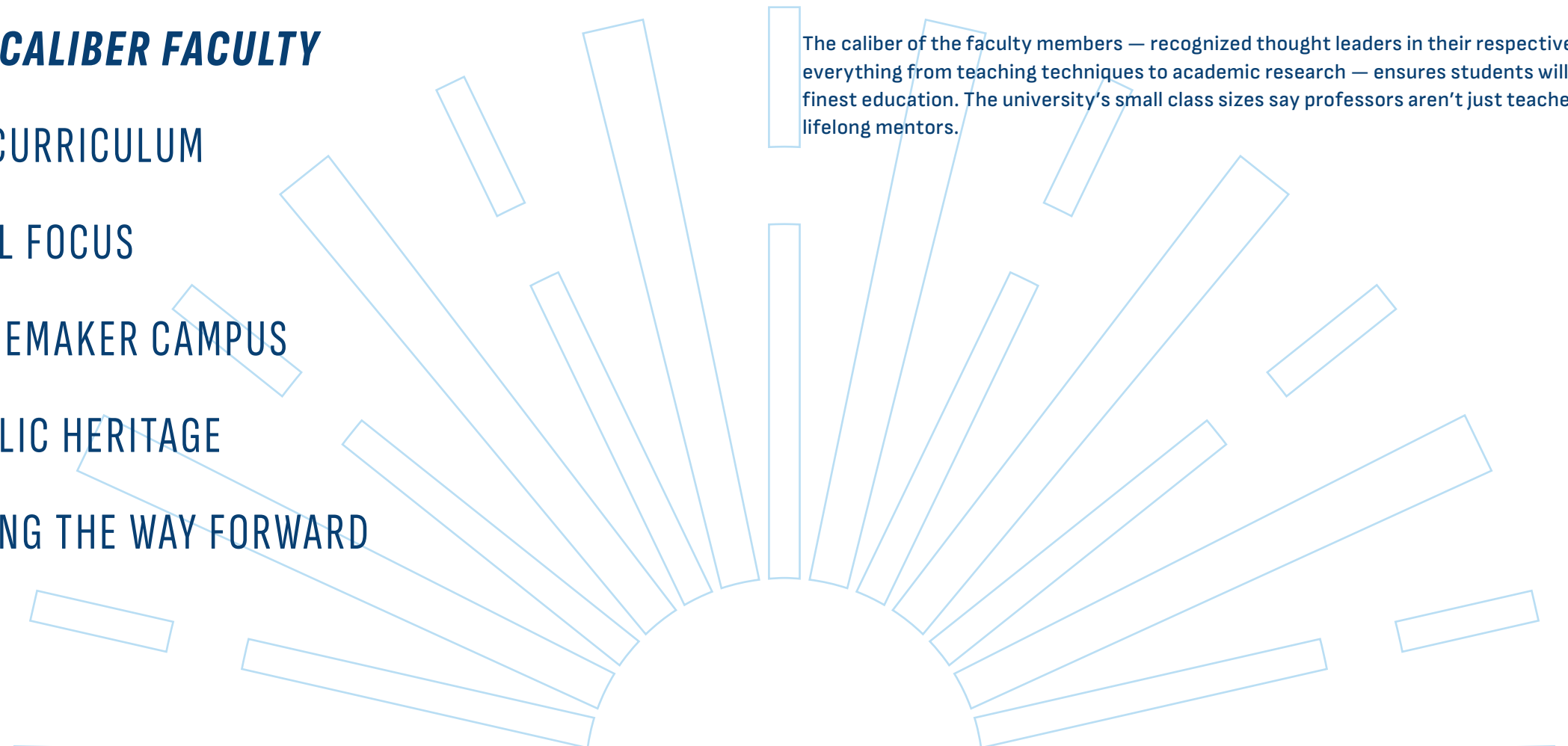
CORE CURRICULUM

GLOBAL FOCUS

CHANGEMAKER CAMPUS

CATHOLIC HERITAGE

LIGHTING THE WAY FORWARD



The caliber of the faculty members — recognized thought leaders in their respective fields, for everything from teaching techniques to academic research — ensures students will receive the finest education. The university's small class sizes say professors aren't just teachers, but also lifelong mentors.

BUILDING A BRAND

HIGH-CALIBER FACULTY


CORE CURRICULUM

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LIGHTING THE WAY FORWARD



The core curriculum allows students to receive an education that's like no other. Faculty members fashioned the dynamic curriculum so students could customize, curate and shape their own academic journeys. The core curriculum is a unique blend of liberal arts and the Catholic intellectual tradition — designed to allow students the chance to explore, pivot and dive deeper into subjects they find inspiring.

BUILDING A BRAND

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The university's global focus — on border relations with Mexico, on peacemaking efforts from Nepal to Uganda, and on a study-abroad experience that offers 70 academic programs in more than 35 countries and consistently ranks among the top schools in the nation for the number of undergraduate students who participate — means that the University of San Diego is making a difference around the world.

BUILDING A BRAND

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As the first university on the West Coast to officially be designated as a Changemaker campus, and as one of only 25 Changemaker campuses around the world, USD is committed to providing opportunities for all students to engage in social change and social innovation, both inside and outside the classroom. The more than 50,000 hours of community engagement that students, faculty and staff dedicate each year is proof that USD is changing lives — in local neighborhoods, in downtown San Diego, across the border and in far-flung corners of the world.

BUILDING A BRAND

HIGH-CALIBER FACULTY

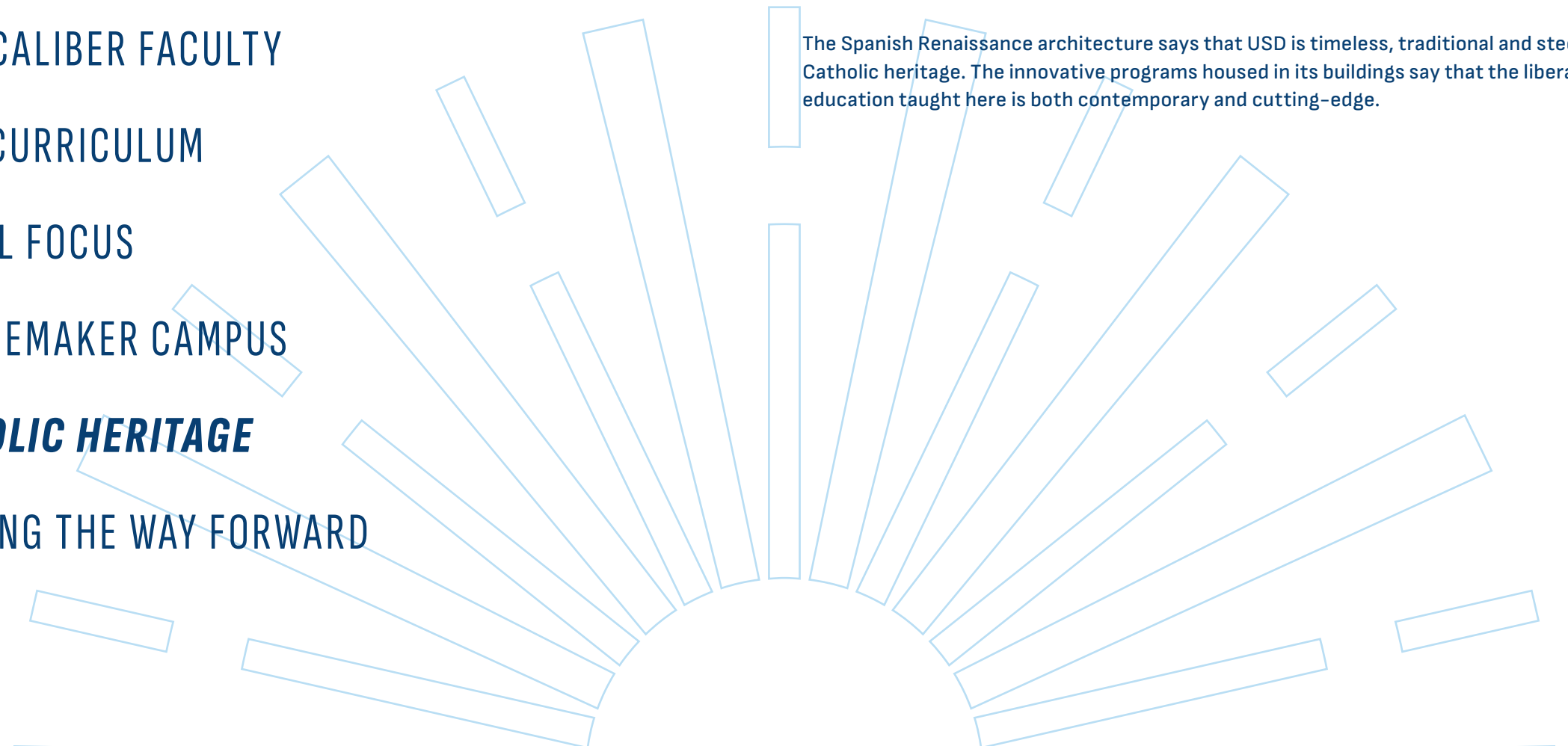
CORE CURRICULUM

GLOBAL FOCUS

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CATHOLIC HERITAGE

LIGHTING THE WAY FORWARD



The Spanish Renaissance architecture says that USD is timeless, traditional and steeped in Catholic heritage. The innovative programs housed in its buildings say that the liberal arts education taught here is both contemporary and cutting-edge.

BUILDING A BRAND

HIGH-CALIBER FACULTY

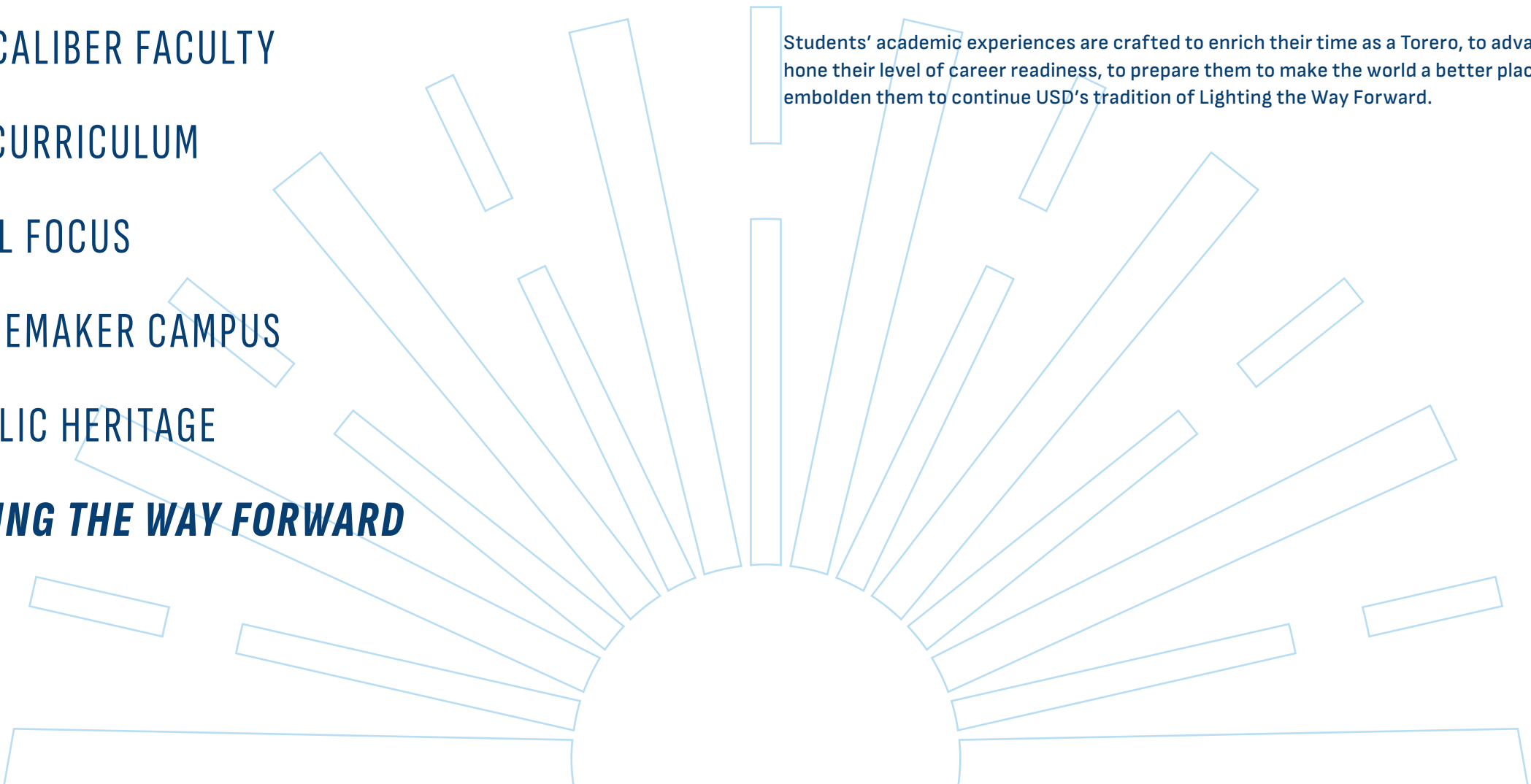
CORE CURRICULUM

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CATHOLIC HERITAGE

LIGHTING THE WAY FORWARD



Students' academic experiences are crafted to enrich their time as a Torero, to advance and hone their level of career readiness, to prepare them to make the world a better place and to embolden them to continue USD's tradition of Lighting the Way Forward.

BUILDING A BRAND

A Brand Must Have a Foundation

The University of San Diego's brand is based on a commitment to, and a belief in, our mission, vision and values. Our brand is reflected in what we do and say, what we proclaim, what messages we impart, as an institution and as members of the university community. It's also an ongoing promise to find new and inspiring ways to continue *Lighting the Way Forward*.

Mission

We are a contemporary Catholic university, grounded in the liberal arts and anchored along an international border, advancing academic excellence to create a more inclusive, sustainable and hopeful world.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on May 5, 2023.

Vision

Strengthened by the Catholic intellectual tradition, we confront humanity's challenges by fostering peace, working for justice and leading with love.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on May 5, 2023.



BUILDING A BRAND

A Brand Must Have Cornerstones

The University of San Diego's strategic plan is aptly named *Lighting the Way to 2030*. This strategic plan will ensure that we continue to provide an exceptional educational experience while expanding our impact on the world. The plan is built on four cornerstones.

Foster Inspired and Meaningful Lives

One cornerstone is our enduring mission to foster inspired and meaningful lives. Grounded in the liberal arts and the Catholic intellectual tradition, we believe in the transformative power of education to prepare our students not only for professional success, but also for lives of purpose and fulfillment.

Cultivate Innovation to Serve Humanity

As we look to the future, we also recognize the importance of cultivating innovation to serve humanity. Our commitment to the principles of *Laudato Si'* and our vibrant culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and Changemaking guide our determination to foster creative solutions that protect the dignity of the human person and promote the common good.

Care for Our Community

Integral to the success of our university and the well-being of all who are part of it is our commitment to care for our community. We recognize that to achieve our vision, we must invest in one another and carefully steward our resources. This plan ensures that we create a supportive, inclusive, and welcoming environment where every member of our community can thrive.

Expand Our Global Vision as an Anchor Institution

Finally, we are steadfast in our goal to expand our global vision as an anchor institution. Situated in Linda Vista and at the crossroads of an international border, we are uniquely positioned to engage with and reflect the realities of our communities.

BUILDING A BRAND

A Brand Must Have Pillars

USD's brand is strengthened by four pillars, which were created with input from alumni, faculty, staff, students and trustees.

Excellence in Learning

The University of San Diego continues to raise the bar on learning. By innovating the approach to a classic liberal arts education and applying a rigorous curriculum that values development of all kinds — scientific and artistic, social and entrepreneurial, emotional and spiritual — students are uniquely prepared with a comprehensive skillset and holistic viewpoint.

Nurturing Community

At USD, the health and wellness of the entire campus community is a priority. We want our students, faculty and staff to know, deep down, that they belong here. We want our students to succeed academically. We want them to learn and to serve and to experience joy. We want them to grow in their spirituality and to be well, in every sense of the word. To us, that's what it means to thrive. With smaller class sizes, a wealth of academic and social resources, and the innate feeling of community, USD students are supported in ways that are unrivaled by most institutions.

Contemporary Catholic

The University of San Diego was founded on a Catholic intellectual tradition to inspire Changemakers — those committed to social justice, inclusive excellence and relentless inquiry. It's this compassionate service that will prepare students to make a positive difference in the world.

Inspiring Environment

The commitment to cultivating positive change is something that drives students, faculty members and alumni worldwide.

OUR VOICE

Tone Words

To create a brand voice that's nimble and ready to flex for multiple audiences — students, parents, alumni and others — we defined a baseline, an emotional core for our general messaging. We began by identifying unique traits consistent with the University of San Diego brand. Five tone words were selected. Depending on your target audience, each word's effect can be intensified or reduced, if you will, to speak in a unique way to different audiences.

Compassionate

USD offers a compassionate environment and supportive campus where people respect each other and allow others to grow.

Innovative

The mentality at USD is innovative, it's a place where advancement and forward thinking is of the utmost priority.

Intentional

USD's work — on campus, across the nation and around the world — is intentional, grounded in mission, purpose and real-world applications.

Engaged

Students, faculty and staff at USD are engaged — they are here and they are present because active advancement requires one's full attention.

Bright

The energy at USD is something altogether bright, more than intelligent, but promising and uplifting — inspired by the opportunities that are only available at USD, a place committed to Lighting the Way Forward.

OUR VOICE

Storytelling Priorities

One of the ways we demonstrate how the University of San Diego lights the way forward is through telling the stories of our people and programs. At USD, we bring our mission to life by creating authentic stories that reflect the distinct voices, values and positive impacts of our people and programs. For the 2025–26 academic year, we've identified the following four storytelling priorities that will guide content development within the Department of University Marketing and Communications.

Celebrating Thriving Toreros

There are countless authentic examples of students, faculty, staff and alumni living their personal and professional lives with purpose, passion and impact. Their unique journeys — both at USD and after graduating — are what make the university special and what empower all Toreros to live inspired and meaningful lives. These profile-style pieces help promote holistic success, well-being and a sense of belonging within the campus community and a distinct connection for Toreros around the world.

Promoting Wellness

To coincide with both the Be Well USD initiative and the opening of USD's Palomar Health Student Wellness Center, these stories are focused on the personal health, happiness and well-being of members of the campus community. As we dedicate ourselves to developing the whole person, these pieces will raise awareness of the multitude of services available to Toreros and seek to promote the importance of health and well-being.

Broadening Connections — Locally and Globally

The University of San Diego is an anchor institution and important partner in the region, as well as an internationally recognized name in higher education. These stories highlight ways USD is growing its curricula, cross-border initiatives and global partnerships to create more robust economies and showcase individuals and groups that utilize specialty skills for the 21st century.

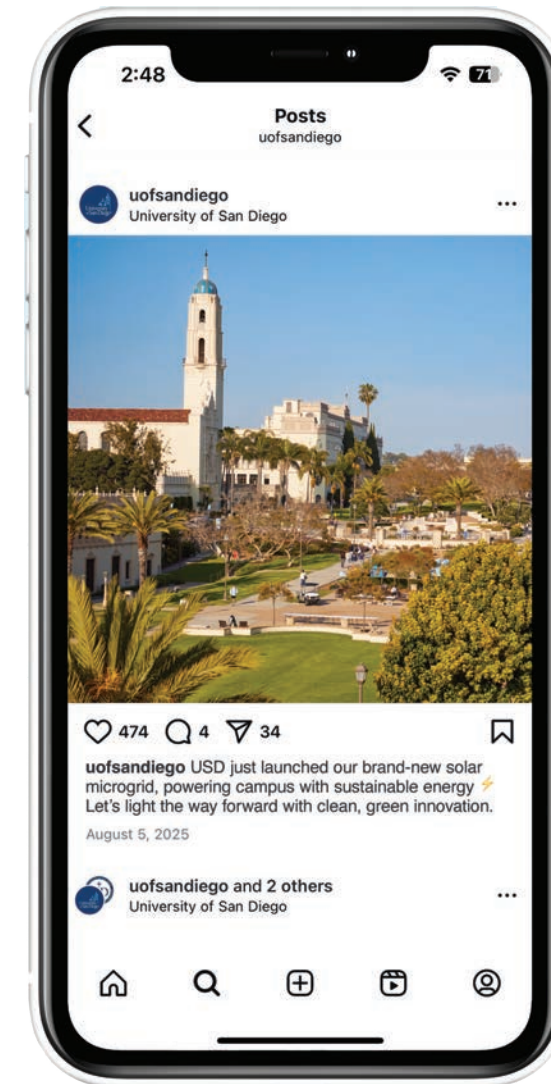
Serving with Compassion

Compassionate service is a distinguishing characteristic of USD as a Catholic university. These stories seek to showcase how Toreros are creating a more inclusive, sustainable and hopeful world. Through their work, these individuals or groups are seeking to address the most pressing contemporary social issues, in order to enhance human dignity and light the way forward for all.

OUR VOICE

Messaging

By drawing inspiration from our brand concept, *Lighting the Way Forward*, and adjusting our tone words per audience, we're able to unify our brand messaging across all channels. Tone words and the concepts and emotions behind them should flex based on the medium. For example, an Instagram post, geared toward women in an age range of 18 to 35, might rely heavily on tone words such as innovative and bright. Compare that to an e-newsletter, geared toward a more mature audience, which might rely more on showcasing a feeling of being intentional and compassionate. Our shared goal is to speak with the same brand voice, while adapting our tone to each audience. By tailoring communications to each group — from current and prospective students, to faculty members, administrators and staff to alumni, parents, donors and friends — focused messaging encourages each audience to engage with the University of San Diego's evolving and ever-dynamic story.



Example of Messaging for an Instagram Post

OUR VOICE

Headlines

A good headline is interesting as well as concise. It communicates a single thought. Before writing any headlines for the University of San Diego, always keep in mind the audience for whom you are writing — there's a difference between how a first-year student speaks compared to a research professor. Also, don't be afraid to use location-based language — our region is a unique and desirable destination. Engaging headlines lead audiences to the body copy, your longer-form message, which is the full story you're trying to convey. Make sure your headlines are easy to understand. Clarity beats complexity every time.

Body Copy

This is where your story lives. Every USD story we tell should be authentic, compelling and thoughtful. This doesn't mean always speaking with a single voice, but clearly communicating to engage our readers in thoughtful and unexpected ways. Great body copy inspires action and engages audiences — encouraging people to visit campus, enroll in classes, make a gift, get involved and, ideally, become a Changemaker. The University of San Diego is shaping minds to confront humanity's urgent challenges. Think about how to flex our tone words whenever possible, fine-tuning each for specific audiences.

From postcards to web content to editorial to advertising, we are charged with being the outward-facing voice of the institution. As such, keep in mind that every writer needs an editor. Every piece of copy benefits when viewed by a second set of eyes. **All copy should be proofread for content and to assure that it's consistent with USD's writing standards.** To download the writing style guide, visit sandiego.edu/brand and click on the Writing Style Guide button.

Headline Examples

Headlines should be targeted and concise. A single thought should be easily communicated.

Undergraduate Student Audience

**BRINGING INNOVATION
TO LIGHT**

Graduate Student Audience

**LIGHTING THE WAY TO A
BRIGHTER WORLD**

Working Professional Student Audience

**ILLUMINATING YOUR PATH
TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

Location-Based Language

**SERVING AS A BEACON OF
HOPE FOR THE COMMUNITY**

OUR VOICE

How It All Comes Together

When we bring these elements together, what happens is magical. It's inspiring. It's something we want to shout from the rooftops, sing from the loftiest of places and declare for all the world to hear. And so, at the University of San Diego, we wrote what we call our Lighting the Way Forward anthem.

In times of darkness, we seek the light.
The light of wisdom, that fills our minds.
The light of compassion, that fills our hearts.
The light of faith, that illuminates our paths.
In this place, and from this vantage point,
Our light shines.

We come together as a community,
To foster peace, work for justice and lead with love.
We channel our collective talents,
To fearlessly pursue beauty, goodness and truth.
We cross borders and boundaries,
To create a more hopeful, inclusive and sustainable world.

Inspired by luminary scholars, leaders and supporters,
We are creating futures,
We are expanding the limits of knowledge,
We are breaking new ground,
We are confronting humanity's challenges,
We are leading innovation to make the world a better place.

At the University of San Diego, we are

LIGHTING THE WAY FORWARD.