

Academic Reputation - Green Paper

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Summary of Proposed Actions

For USD to enhance its academic reputation, we recommend the following actions:

- I. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
 1. Recruit, retain, and promote more faculty of color and implement policies to support them once they are at USD
 2. Recruit and retain students of color, and support their academic success by improving campus climate and enhancing the diversity, inclusion, and social justice focus of our curriculum
 3. Collect and disseminate more specific data related to issues of DEI including an assessment of the experiences of underrepresented faculty and students at USD

- II. Innovation and Interdisciplinary Initiatives
 1. Support faculty who engage in interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching by valuing this work in the tenure and promotion process, removing barriers to team-teaching, and allocating funds to incentivize collaboration
 2. Prioritize interdisciplinary faculty hires and enact policies to ensure the success of interdisciplinary faculty at USD
 3. Create a university-wide Task Force to revisit the mission of PCE to redesign its role as a service unit to all academic units and as a center of innovation

- III. High-Impact Learning
 1. Consolidate, measure, and highlight our high-impact learning activities for stronger impact and enhanced reputation
 2. Torero Week: A one week event, set aside within the semester, for all students to engage in experiential learning opportunities from an array of options developed across disciplines and levels
 3. Require all students to have a global/multicultural experience

- IV. Communication
 1. Employ a dynamic software platform to allow for timely, efficient and widespread information-sharing across USD stakeholders
 2. Increase internal communication through community meetings and town halls
 3. Optimize the search capability within the USD website
 4. Increase faculty involvement in communicating to the public by providing media training, recognizing and rewarding public scholarship and public engagement
 5. Tap students and student-faculty collaborations as a resource for communicating in ways that can enhance USD's academic reputation
 6. Increase frequency, depth and breadth of communication between professional staff and other USD stakeholders

Introduction

An institution's academic reputation represents the extent to which it is perceived as providing its constituents with value through education, research, and innovation. Academic reputation is a perception, built on the realities of an institution as well as beliefs about the institution shaped by direct and indirect experiences and communications. USD's academic reputation rests in the minds of prospective students, other universities, industry, community partners, alumni, prospective faculty, and the general public at the local, national and international scale. Reputation is dynamic, which means that strategic efforts to enhance reputation can be fruitful.

In keeping with our mission as an engaged contemporary Catholic university, USD is widely recognized for its commitment to academic excellence, promotion of ethical conduct, and compassionate service to the community. Evidence of our strong reputation can be found not only in our national rankings (#88), but also in the fact that we are one of just 119 US academic institutions to receive the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, and one of just 51 universities in the world to be designated an Ashoka Changemaker Campus^{1,2}. Even more impressive is that we are one of only ten universities in the United States to have earned both designations.

As the only major Catholic university along the Southwestern border, USD is ideally situated to provide innovative cross-cultural educational opportunities for its students and the broader community. USD is consistently ranked in the top five of US universities for the percentage of undergraduate students who study abroad. Global experiences are also integrated across all of our post-graduate programs, reflecting the value placed on understanding and participating within the wider global community. San Diego itself is a very multicultural city; the foreign-born population in the City of San Diego is approximately 27.1% of the city's total population, compared to foreign-born persons accounting for 13.7% of the total population in the U.S.³ Additionally, as the second largest refugee resettlement community in the United States, San Diego offers our students and faculty a wide array of opportunities within this multicultural region to realize the university's goal of serving as an anchor institution. Furthermore, USD being located in the 8th largest city in the country, with proximity to several highly developed industries as well as entrepreneurial start-ups, lends itself to partnerships with both private and nonprofit sectors and both large and small organizations. By strategically and effectively engaging with local and international partners to improve our region and the broader international community through healthcare innovation, social justice, inclusive economic development, and environmental stewardship, it is important to position ourselves as an institution that utilizes high-impact and best practices at the local, national and global level. Vibrant and innovative centers and institutes in every academic unit act as a conduit between campus life and the external community.

Like all US institutions of higher education, USD is facing unprecedented challenges. As the national birth rate declines and competition for students increases, USD's academic reputation will be of crucial importance to future success. Within the context of our mission, it will be critical to build on and enhance our existing strengths along with leveraging the uniqueness of our border location within a large urban multicultural city. USD is an institution with a clear mission and demonstrated dedication to academic excellence. Focusing on the priorities outlined in this green paper will distinguish USD and will help us attract a new generation of

domestic and international students, who are diverse, attracted to experiential learning, and committed to advocacy, cross-cultural understanding, and social justice.

We have identified four priorities that build upon our current strengths and serve the mission of the University of San Diego. To best advance our academic reputation, we believe it is important to take bold steps⁴ to become leaders in these areas among our peer institutions. These four priorities are:

- I. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- II. Innovation and Interdisciplinary Initiatives
- III. High-Impact Learning
- IV. Communication

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

USD must be diverse, equitable, and inclusive in order to be academically rich, authentic, and rigorous. Student learning and faculty scholarship cannot thrive without an understanding of, and appreciation for, diverse ways of thinking that can only come from the inclusion of students, faculty, employees, and campus partners from different backgrounds, experiences, and identities. Moreover, prospective students and faculty seek institutions of higher learning that demonstrate their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. To enhance USD's academic reputation, therefore, we must *become* more diverse and inclusive in order to be *perceived* as such, both internally and externally.

The fact that USD is a predominately white institution is at odds with our mission of creating a diverse and inclusive community. A diverse and inclusive community fosters academic and scholarly excellence and prepares our students to be informed, effective, and compassionate leaders. Below we discuss three main DEI problems at USD: the lack of a diverse faculty, problems recruiting and retaining students of color, and a dearth of information about whether students and faculty from underrepresented groups feel adequately supported.

Diversifying our faculty. Faculty of color at USD are significantly underrepresented compared to the national average and to similar California schools.⁵⁻¹⁰ Although several exceptional faculty of color have joined USD over the last several years, this overarching fact has not changed.¹⁰ This problem plagues both undergraduate and graduate programs, though some units do better than others.¹⁰

The lack of diversity undermines our message of inclusion. It also creates a self-perpetuating dynamic that hampers our ability to attract both new faculty members and students.¹¹ Increasing faculty diversity shows both prospective students and faculty that we value and welcome them. Students believe that professors who look like them are natural allies, role models, and potential mentors. Universities similar to ours, such as Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, have more diverse faculties,⁹ putting us at a competitive disadvantage for student and faculty recruitment. Such faculty members' varied perspectives and backgrounds will also enrich our campus, curriculum, and scholarship.

USD can expand and improve on at least two initiatives that have increased faculty diversity. First, in 2014, the College of Arts and Sciences and the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering hired eight women faculty of color as a "cluster" in multiple STEM tenure track

positions¹²; six have stayed and earned tenure. Second, since 2013 the Diversity Postdoctoral Faculty Program in the CAS has also increased the number of faculty of color. This program recruits scholars for two-year fellowships from communities that are underrepresented in academia. Since the program's inception, seventeen postdoctoral fellows have joined USD, five of whom have accepted tenure-track positions at USD. Others have continued their appointments, but some have left USD because no tenure-track position was available. USD now fully funds the hiring of three postdoctoral faculty for two-year positions every other year.

Cluster hires and initiatives like the Diversity Postdoctoral Faculty Program have been successful because simultaneously hiring several faculty at time, especially if they are in related fields, creates a community of scholars, thereby reducing feelings of isolation or tokenism. Cluster hires show students that USD is committed to creating a faculty that reflects the student body. It also addresses the university's poor DEI reputation by communicating the institution's serious commitment to diversity to both faculty and students. Recent studies at other institutions show cluster hires can also change campus-wide perceptions of the importance of diversity and create buy-in among faculty across campus.¹³ It can also "improve institutional excellence over all by breaking down silos, reallocating resources to benefit the whole institution and attracting innovative, nontraditional scholars."¹⁴

Once we hire faculty, USD must make sure they succeed. This requires creating an environment at USD that is not just inclusive of faculty of color, but one which is designed for them to thrive. Important steps to take include ensuring junior faculty of color are provided with good and supportive mentoring, making sure that there is a commitment to service work involving diversity issues by *all* faculty at USD, and that this work is properly compensated and acknowledged for things like promotion and tenure. Perhaps most importantly, we must listen to and address the concerns of faculty of color (for example, the recommendations voiced in the letter drafted by Black faculty at USD in the summer of 2020). In addition, creating more opportunities for faculty engagement across disciplines (which connects to our interdisciplinary initiatives below) and adjusting teaching loads to enable faculty to produce important scholarship while developing new classes could help.

Diversifying our student body. Despite USD's commitment and sincere efforts to increase student diversity, the proportion of students of color has remained flat over the last seven years.¹⁵ For campus diversity, USD ranks well below the top 100 in the U.S. News and World Report rankings and below similar California schools.^{7,8} In addition, students of color graduate at significantly lower rates than our university average.¹⁶ Black students pass the bar at lower rates than the law school's average.

Essential to the retention and success of students of color is ensuring they are supported once on campus (see also Student Experience Green Paper). There are currently several organizations and initiatives at USD that do provide resources and build community among students of color and improve USD's academic reputation for diversity. They include the Black Student Resource Commons and academic support programs such as the successful McNair Scholars Program, which supports students who wish to pursue graduate degrees.

There have also been some positive steps to incorporate diversity-focused courses and themes into the curriculum across the campus. For example, faculty across campus have designed courses for the diversity, inclusion and social justice requirement in the new

undergraduate core curriculum, and SOLES has recently offered professional development to all faculty to help them decolonize their curriculum. These efforts represent a good start, but they are not enough. A recent study indicates that Black students at USD (our most underrepresented group) feel less valued and supported than white and Latinx students.¹⁷ Fifty three percent of Black students feel valued at USD compared to 83% of white students. Only a quarter of Black students (compared to 52% white students) felt that USD prepared them to work effectively with people from various backgrounds. Further steps to improve interactions among students and between instructors and our students of color are clearly needed.

Collecting data to promote DEI. In researching the current status of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts on campus, we confronted a lack of data about the experiences of faculty and students of color. We do not know which (if any) of our many efforts to fulfill our mission to create a diverse and inclusive community are succeeding or failing. The Campus Climate Survey, for example, does not disaggregate data about particular student and faculty racial and ethnic groups or LGBTQ communities.¹⁸ We suspect that high tuition poses a barrier for many students of color, but we could not even determine what percentage of scholarship money goes to students of color. Except for the data collected by Mills et al. (2020)¹⁷, we do not know whether USD students find our diversity core curriculum to be valuable. We lack a clear sense of how faculty and students feel about their experiences at USD. We cannot effectively move forward without it.

We recommend the following proposed actions:

1. Recruit, retain, and promote more faculty of color by building on past successes.

- Direct substantial funding to new cluster hires that prioritize faculty of color. These cluster hires could dovetail with hiring of interdisciplinary faculty (see Interdisciplinary Initiatives priority below). One possible approach is to pool all open lines in the University towards this goal. We could also tailor these efforts for schools and departments where racial and ethnic diversity among faculty members is particularly low.
- Continue and expand the Diversity Postdoctoral Faculty Program, and create a clear and explicit pathway for these scholars to transition into tenure-track positions, even when departments do not have open lines. Similar programs should be strongly considered and funded for other units besides the College of Arts and Sciences.
- Establish benchmarks and metrics that can be assessed. To be successful in diversifying our faculty, we must hold ourselves accountable.
- Implement initiatives and policies to support faculty of color once they are at USD, such as: a) recognizing and compensating service work involving anti-racism efforts, b) granting pre-tenure sabbaticals, c) ensuring ARRT guidelines across campus value scholarship, service, and teaching focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and that biases in student evaluations and other metrics are accounted for.

2. Recruit, retain, and support the academic success of students of color

- Require anti-racist training for all faculty to improve campus climate for our students of color.
- Become a Hispanic Serving Institution (see Green Paper by Enrollment, Programs, and Schools team).
- Expand curriculum that is focused on issues relating to diversity, inclusion, and social justice across schools. This will also likely enhance the interdisciplinarity of our curriculum (connecting to our Interdisciplinary Initiatives priority).
- Require that all departments and programs have learning outcomes focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, with a particular emphasis on anti-racism.

3. Collect and disseminate more specific data related to issues of DEI.

- Benchmark and monitor our efforts to recruit and promote faculty of color to ensure their success.
- Gather data about the experiences of underrepresented faculty and students (including disaggregating data that is already collected for different racial identities, gender identities, backgrounds, etc.).
- Conduct an assessment of curriculum across programs to better understand if diverse perspectives and the experiences of persons of color are included.

Innovation and Interdisciplinary Initiatives

As we look towards the future and aim to set USD apart from other universities, innovative pedagogy and scholarship are crucial to improve our academic reputation. Expanding interdisciplinary teaching and research opportunities are one key avenue that amplifies USD's existing strengths. This is particularly important given that a strong campus culture of collaboration and interdisciplinarity has been shown to be crucial to being recognized as an innovative and forward-thinking university.^{19, 20} Interdisciplinary learning focused on problem-solving can also better prepare students for meaningful careers, and can be important in closing equity gaps between students of color and non-minority students, thus complementing our first priority.²¹ Secondly, by expanding and enhancing online learning opportunities, we have the potential to extend a USD education to learners who do not traditionally have access to existing on-campus programs. This is an important key area for growth at USD, especially at the graduate level, and it is imperative for the university's reputation and sustainability in the 21st century.

Incentivization for interdisciplinary research and teaching

USD is home to faculty and students who are passionate about some of the most important and urgent challenges facing humanity today, all of which can only be addressed by integrating perspectives from multiple disciplines. USD has several centers and programs that facilitate collaborative work, including the [Changemaker Hub](#), [Center for Peace and Commerce](#), and the [Humanities Center](#), to name a few. In addition, all of the academic units have programs that connect to our unique location in a multicultural and border city in a way that promotes social justice issues and our mission as an engaged Catholic university: [HSN](#), [CAS](#), [SMSE](#), [Law](#), [KSPS](#), the [Mulvaney Center](#), and the [Tijuana Hub](#). However, the majority of these centers

are housed within single schools, and a lack of substantial funding has provided few incentives and opportunities for faculty and students to engage in interdisciplinary work. USD has, however, increased the number of interdisciplinary courses and programs we offer. For example, team-taught courses at the undergraduate level had only previously been possible through the Honors program, but have now expanded through USD's new undergraduate core curriculum. Both team-taught courses and the innovative linked course design (also developed as part of the new undergraduate core curriculum) are excellent models, but haven't been as readily applied across schools, particularly between graduate and undergraduate programs.

For USD to be renowned for its interdisciplinary curriculum, scholarly work, and community projects, we must create incentives for faculty and students to engage in more interdisciplinary work as well as reduce existing barriers to such collaboration. We therefore propose the following actions:

1. Support our faculty in interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching

- Create a university-wide Task Force to draft language that might be included in department and school/college ARRT policies, which would demonstrate support for interdisciplinary collaborations both within USD and with outside organizations.
- Enhance opportunities for faculty to teach interdisciplinary courses with other faculty, including across schools, while fully counting it towards their teaching load. We recommend that the team-teaching and linked course models – originally developed to support USD's undergraduate core curriculum – be expanded to include faculty from all schools, regardless of whether it counts for the core curriculum or not.
- Provide resources and physical and intellectual spaces at USD to encourage innovative collaborations. This can be done by providing substantial funds to existing centers focused on collaborative work at USD, which can support faculty (in the form of stipends and/or reassigned time) and students to collaborate across schools. As suggested by the *Teaching, Learning, and Innovation Team*, this funding can be structured around themes to focus on particularly urgent and important challenges central to USD's mission.

2. Prioritize interdisciplinary faculty hiring.

- Create positions at the university level to hire tenure-track faculty and professors of practice that will span disciplines and even schools.
- Develop cluster faculty hires around important interdisciplinary issues (e.g., environmental justice) to not just bring interdisciplinary individuals on campus, but rather develop a growing community of interdisciplinary scholars. These cluster hires could also be developed with our diversity, equity, and inclusion priority in mind.
- The Provost's office should work closely with schools and departments to develop policies to support these faculty, including clear expectations on possible joint appointments, teaching loads (not tied to a single department or discipline), and the rank and tenure process.

Online Learning Opportunities

USD is known for offering high quality, on-campus degrees and experiences to undergraduate and graduate students. Expanding a USD education to learners who traditionally do not have access to existing on-campus programs is crucial for the university's reputation and sustainability in the 21st century. USD needs to expand educational offerings to new populations at every stage of life, reach new markets domestically and internationally, unlock the potential of university-wide collaborations, and demonstrate what is possible when schools work together in innovative, interdisciplinary ways.

A key area of growth for USD is at the graduate level and with online learning. Master's degree programs have changed dramatically in the past decade. They have grown more popular and are increasingly offered online and specialized in their offerings.²² Additionally, master's programs have gradually enrolled a larger share of students from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds. For example, the share of Black and Hispanic students has nearly doubled to 25 percent in 2016 from 14 percent in 1996. Federal data²³ show more students studying online at virtually all types of institutions and at all levels of post-high school learning. The data also show that graduate students are the most likely to take at least some of their courses online (nearly 40 percent do), followed by four-year (34.5 percent) and two-year undergraduates (33.8 percent). And clearly, since all university courses have been offered online in the past year due to the pandemic, the growth of online course offerings will continue. This represents an opportunity for USD to significantly expand offerings of certificate programs and graduate degrees.

Professional and Continuing Education (PCE) has the potential to cross internal boundaries and extend external ones, promote entrepreneurial initiatives, expand enrollment, pursue new fields of study, and provide opportunities for innovation while aligning with contemporary societal and economic realities. No other USD entity is as flexible or as varied in its portfolio, and as such, PCE is uniquely positioned to extend USD's online reach. However, it currently lacks the resources needed to go beyond its own initiatives and accelerate and expand the reach of the academic units to new audiences. Furthermore, PCE's staff and operations are removed from the rest of the university, which impedes collaboration among academic units.

Online education faces a critical juncture at USD. PCE can serve as a think-tank and catalyst for experimentation, but it must have sufficient resources and the support of faculty and administration in the academic units. We recommend revisiting PCE's mission to ensure that it is more fully integrated into institutional life instead of being regarded as a separate operation with a distinct set of goals and procedures. There are many models for professional and continuing education initiatives, and USD would benefit from adopting one that effectively draws upon and reinforces its own pool of expertise to design programs that will reflect the university's mission and academic excellence.

One possible model for PCE is to be redesigned as a 'University College'. As a 'University College' it could expand programming offerings and serve as a center for academic innovation by continually developing new offerings and new courses. In order to provide these opportunities and to embed PCE into the academic arm of the university, faculty from across campus could have secondary appointments in the University College with these faculty serving on programming committees. This type of model addresses similar recommendations made in the Green Paper by the Enrollment, Program and Schools team.

We recommend the following proposed action:

3. **Create a university-wide Task Force to include faculty from the different units to:**
 - revisit the mission of PCE including strengthening the role of USD faculty in its operation.
 - explore alternative models for professional and continuing educations (e.g., University College at [Tufts University](#)).
 - make recommendations for the redesign of PCE as a unit whose main purpose is to serve all academic units on campus and as a center of innovation and academic excellence in support of USD's mission and academic reputation.
 - expand outreach and engagement efforts through initiatives such as international collaborations, joint and/or double degrees, and microcredentials among others.

High-Impact Learning

High-Impact Learning Practices (HIP) lie at the core of a USD education. These practices are crucial to “increase rates of student retention and student engagement”²⁴. One of the challenges for the university to meet is effectively communicating how we excel at high-impact practices in a way that is better understood both within the USD community and, perhaps especially, for our academic reputation outside of USD.

The University of San Diego has a history of utilizing high-impact practices and, indeed, it excels in more than one area. The university is currently ranked second in undergraduate Study Abroad participation²⁵. At the graduate level, SOLES requires a global experience of all graduates, and 76% of all graduate students in the School of Business have international experiences. Law, Nursing, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Kroc School of Peace Studies also have international programs, research activities, and/or internship opportunities at the graduate level. Strong financial and institutional support has allowed USD to achieve distinction in global experiences for students that should be continued and enhanced. In other areas, Living Learning and Transfer Learning Communities (LLC & TLC) are an important part of our undergraduate experience and integrated into the core curriculum; undergraduate research is supported across many majors; the undergraduate core curriculum includes an integration requirement and writing-intensive courses; internships, clinical work, and clinics allow both undergraduate and post-graduate students to engage and directly apply their learnings; and service and community-based learning is receiving greater emphasis and is an area for which USD is becoming better known, contributing greatly to our reputation as an anchor institution.

Over the past decade, the university has done much to implement HIP at the curricular and co-curricular levels. One of the challenges for the university is in communicating its excellence as an institution that promotes and excels at high-impact practices within the USD community and externally, enhancing our academic reputation. Although we excel in our offerings, simply offering HIP is not enough. We must take great care in implementing them as “implementation quality is critical in terms of realizing the benefits of HIP participation”²⁶. We must find ways to continually assess and improve our HIP at USD, such that we can become known as leaders in this area among peer institutions and prospective students. In addition, we need to improve our external communication about the excellent high-impact learning occurring

at USD; unlike some of its peers, the university does not have a specific webpage to showcase HIP. Below we outline several proposed actions to further develop HIP at USD in support of our academic reputation.

We recommend the following proposed actions:

1. **Improve the communication and tracking of our high-impact learning activities:**
 - Consolidate and highlight our high-impact learning activities for stronger impact through a cohesive website and other external communication strategies. We could periodically “feature” various high-impact learning experiences and label them as such. Examples of how high-impact learning is featured at other institutions can be seen at [Santa Clara University](#), [University of Southern California](#), and [Loyola University Chicago](#).
 - Improve USD’s “tracking” of participation in various types of high-impact activities (some we already do) not only to promote the varied opportunities and engagement of our students, but also to assess the effectiveness of different efforts and determine if we are meeting the needs of all students. Some example questions to address include: (1) What percentage of our students engage in community-based learning? (2) What percentage of our students have a multicultural experience prior to graduation? (3) What percentage of our students participate in internships? (4) What percentage of our students engage in research with faculty or complete “capstone projects”? and (5) What do we know about student experiences in high-impact learning activities (i.e. through surveys beyond the NSSE data already being collected)? Tracking and assessment of HIP should be incorporated into a communications plan so that this information can be readily accessed and used in marketing for USD.

2. **Develop a “Torero Week,”** a week set aside for students to engage in an experiential learning opportunity from an array of options developed across disciplines and levels.
 - Some example activities might include students collaborating on research with faculty, a community activity, or an interdisciplinary project. These activities would be hands-on and high-impact, and engage students in the analysis, creation, and implementation of concepts that would be very difficult to do in the classroom. Faculty would submit proposals for a Torero Week activity that could occur on campus, regionally, or internationally for the week. For example, students could be working directly and assisting an organization across the border with a particular project. Or they could be examining erosion along the San Diego coast linking such things as the science, regional policy differences, and local impact. The opportunities and ideas are endless.
 - The activities would incorporate the benefits from perspectives of faculty and students across various disciplines, experience, and backgrounds, thus supporting our priority of increased interdisciplinary collaborations.
 - Such a week would be an opportunity to highlight what USD already does so well, engage all students in this learning opportunity, and also distinguish the educational experience that USD offers, enhancing our reputation.

- 3. Require a global/multicultural experience prior to graduation.** The experience would be designed to assure that all students have the opportunity to develop a multicultural perspective and incorporate multiple opportunities. This requirement builds upon a strength that USD already possesses and takes advantage of our unique location, on the border and within the culturally diverse city of San Diego. SOLES has very successfully implemented such a requirement that could be expanded across campus and adjusted to the uniqueness of the various Schools, departments and programs. Such a requirement would distinguish USD and enhance our reputation as a university meeting our mission of developing unique thinkers, with a global perspective, able to make positive contributions by confronting humanity's urgent challenges in places near and far.

Communication

Perhaps the most essential ingredient to enhancing the academic reputation of USD is communicating our accomplishments and contributions to the local, national, and international community. Although USD has a professional communications and marketing staff dedicated to this goal, there are a variety of ways that the academic units at USD can help facilitate a stronger and more positive profile of the university and its constituent parts. In particular, the academic units are well-positioned to make improvements to communication both internally and externally.

By internal communication, we refer to the various ways in which stakeholders at USD (students, faculty, administrators, staff) are aware of, appreciate, and support one another's programming, curricula and outreach efforts. By external communication, we refer to how USD and its constituent parts are perceived by those outside of USD (e.g., by prospective students and families, peer institutions, employers, graduate programs, potential donors, etc.). Our reputation beyond USD is communicated through rankings, enrollment numbers, corporate and civic engagements, post-graduation employment statistics, research publications, word of mouth, and press coverage, among other ways. Our reputation is also communicated strategically through advertising, branding and marketing efforts, the USD website and its internal sites, and digital viewbooks for prospective students.

Internal Communication

Students, faculty and staff at USD currently learn about one another's work in a variety of ways, such as emailed/printed e-newsletters from individual academic units/centers, event postings on MySanDiego and emailed announcements, the Provost's Newsletter, collections and scholarship in [Digital USD](#), and word of mouth. To the extent that USD stakeholders are tapped into particular communities- and people-of-interest (e.g., Humanities Center events, leadership workshops, a particular USD scholar), they are likely to receive information because they are on distribution lists or receive a personal communication from someone aware of their interest.

However, many USD members do not know enough about what others at USD are doing. This reality hinders collaboration across units, departments and programs (connecting to our Interdisciplinary Initiatives priority). It also limits cross-promotion, such that USD

stakeholders are less able to advocate on behalf of other USD units/offerings when appropriate either internally or externally. Increased collaboration and cross-promotion can increase USD's academic reputation more broadly.

Toward that end, we recommend the following proposed actions:

1. **Design or purchase a technical solution, grounded in the goal of sharing information in a timely, effortless fashion.** We envision a dynamic database or interactive platform that would :
 - Enable all USD users (individuals, centers and programs) to build a profile, indicating interests, expertise, and which could be updated anytime to also include information about upcoming hosted events, presentations, publications, and community engagements.
 - Allow USD affiliated staff, students, faculty and administrators to search this living database by keyword; search results would pull not only from created profiles, but also from all internal and external communications at USD (e.g., mypostings, newsletters from centers and schools, news, and website).
 - Enable users to opt-in to notifications based on identified topics/programs of interest, so that information sharing occurs on an ongoing basis year round.

Note that the School of Business at USD already employs the IN app to promote events, which demonstrates some initial possibilities.

2. **Optimize the search capability within the USD website.** There are two components to the search box tool on the USD website: 1) the database/tool that provides search results, faceting at a basic level, and special tagging for certain USD departments and programs, and 2) the content provided by a campus of content maintainers. ITS has the ability to manipulate the tool for more effective relevance-ranking, more faceting, but they do not have overall control of the content that resides in this university knowledgebase. This part of the equation is problematic because it hinders the relevance of results, making the tool less effective from a user perspective. Some of this content is even considered orphan content by ITS – when a webpage is no longer attached to a department/unit's current site as a relevant link but is only "out there" because of the author's desire to store it long-term in some manner. Most of this type of content is older – Google Drive made it less necessary to use the USD website this way. With over 200 content maintainers, a concerted effort should be made to clean up departmental/unit content via the departmental/unit content maintainers. By setting a deadline that content is reviewed, and old content is deleted or updated, any webpage that is not relevantly attached to the department/unit will be taken offline by ITS.
3. **Take a much more proactive approach to information sharing and community building across campus in order to enhance our reputation more broadly.** In particular, to cultivate a culture of cross-promotion, we propose:
 - Regularly scheduled virtual town halls (both university wide and within schools) at which faculty/staff/administrators can update one another on activities, events, priorities, goals and interests. These events could leverage tele-conferencing technology to increase participation.

- Bi-annual cross-unit meet-ups (e.g., CAS and SOLES facilitate a meet-and-share day to cross-cultivate ideas about programming, research, and outreach).
- The creation of a campus Council of [Centers and Institutes](#), where directors meet regularly to discuss their respective center initiatives and external collaborations. This interaction should foster interdisciplinary cooperation to provide comprehensive academic expertise to meet the needs of industry, community partners and students.

External Communication:

USD currently communicates about its students, faculty, programs, and various scholarly and civic contributions to those beyond the university campus in a variety of ways. Some of these communication venues include the *USD Magazine*, unit/department-specific publications, hosted academic events and public lectures, the *President's Postcard*, and media relations' news releases. USD has also recently engaged in a comprehensive branding initiative to update, streamline and standardize USD websites, viewbooks, and other public-facing materials.

The academic units can also contribute to efforts to communicate in ways that will enhance USD's academic reputation, in particular. The earlier sections of this Green Paper on Academic Reputation articulated various ways to build on existing strengths and implement new initiatives to improve USD's reputation. Below, we suggest ways to *communicate* about these strengths and efforts, beyond the existing efforts by University Communications and individual units' established efforts in marketing and public engagement.

First, faculty are well-positioned to play a stronger role. Studies show how the mere referencing of universities in the news – typically produced when professors are summoned to provide expert comments on current affairs or social issues – can lead to a more positive and prestigious image of the universities²⁷. It is also clear that to effectively reach the public via the news media, faculty (and all university members, for that matter) must know how to demonstrate the relevance of their work, and how to embrace simplicity and clarity in their communications.

Toward this end, we propose the following actions:

4. **Increase the involvement of faculty in communicating with the public** by:

- Regularly scheduled Public Scholarship/Media Training for all faculty (not just new faculty) in all units, which should include:
 - training on how to identify ways to proactively promote their expertise (instead of waiting for media requests)
 - training on how to correspond effectively with the public, including journalists
 - training on public scholarship formats and best practices (e.g, how to write an effective OpEd, how to pitch ideas and stories to media outlets). It is worth noting that some USD faculty are well-versed in these areas already, and they could be used as resources and/or guides for such training.
 - frank discussions about the value of engaging in PR and public scholarship for USD (i.e. an increased reputation has value to recruit students, donors

and community partners, which are essential for economic well-being and viability of USD)

- training on effective alumni correspondence and engagement
- Increased recognition for public scholarship and public engagement, through awards, recognitions, and/or within rank and tenure decisions

5. Further tap students and student-faculty collaborations as a resource for communicating in ways that can enhance USD's academic reputation by:

- enlisting students/faculty whose disciplines inherently interface with professional communication practices to help with the work of communicating about USD. For example, the departments of Marketing, Communication, Art, Data Analytics, Computer Science, English (and likely others) have students and faculty with abilities and interest to create content about USD for diverse audiences that could be distributed via various outlets.
- adding a focus on public writing within the academic curriculum across all units, to develop students' skills and interest in drafting short-form, public-facing, and/or multimedia communications. This curricular effort prepares students to be effective ambassadors for USD.
- enlisting student bloggers affiliated with student organizations and research teams.
- Hosting an open house at which students, faculty, and Centers/programs can share their work with prospective families and the community at large.

6. More direct and frequent interaction between students/faculty/staff within each unit and USD's professional communication staff, which can help bridge the gap between what happens on campus and how that is communicated beyond USD. This can be done through:

- regularly scheduled meetings between USD's professional communication staff (e.g., marketing officers) and students, faculty, staff, and administrators within and across units.
- a university-wide annual communication calendar and plan to ensure Central Marketing is provided with the most timely program activity and initiatives across campus, and which should be visible to all academic units to allow them to share content with the marketing teams.
- special events like "Torero Week" (see High-Impact Learning priority above) that could serve as particularly beneficial opportunities for faculty, students, and staff to work with the professional communication staff to highlight strengths of USD.

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