

Academic Planning
Teaching, Learning and Innovation Team
Green Paper

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Our team's work has focused on teaching, learning, and innovation. With this goal in mind, we have situated our analysis in the context of USD's foundation by the Religious of the Sacred Heart. The charisms of justice, spirituality, and education which the Society of the Sacred Heart professes¹ are deeply woven into the fabric of the way teaching and learning are understood at USD. As a group, we reached a consensus that the heritage of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, both educationally and spiritually, must be considered as a key factor in planning for USD's future. The themes of justice, spirituality, and education are especially applicable as USD articulates its long-term vision. Beyond a general context of post-Vatican II Catholicism, USD's charism in both its stated principles and actual practices continues to emerge from a matrix created by Catholic religious women who sought educational excellence for women at a time when a minority of women in the West were literate. That same ethical sense of the value of providing truth, beauty, and goodness for all humanity - in all its diversity - is a central theme we used in approaching the topics of teaching, learning and innovation for the future of USD.

¹(<https://rscj.org> accessed on 2/7/21)

Recommendation 1: **Create a New Interdisciplinary Entity at USD**

USD's current academic organizational structure is designed to situate faculty within discipline-based departments. Interdisciplinary collaboration across departments and academic units requires that faculty be released from some department teaching responsibility and that faculty be sufficiently secure in their scholarly work that interdisciplinary scholarship, which may carry less weight than scholarship in the discipline in ARRT evaluations, for example, can be accomplished without weakening a faculty member's chances for reappointment, tenure and promotion. Thus, interdisciplinary faculty collaborations are often restricted in scope and duration due to limitations imposed by existing institutional structures.

It has become increasingly apparent that some of the most pressing contemporary issues (climate change, homelessness, health care equity, food security, human trafficking, biodiversity loss, forced migration, clean water, etc.) are interdisciplinary in nature and can not be understood or addressed in any meaningful way through a single disciplinary lens. It's also clear that educating students to approach complex problems from multiple perspectives requires more than just dispassionate academic consideration. Firsthand knowledge is vital, and experiential learning is key. To execute USD's mission as a contemporary Catholic university, an interdisciplinary entity

that facilitates collaboration and experiential learning among scholars and students across disciplines is needed.

Interdisciplinary, Experiential Entity - Key Features

The interdisciplinary, experiential entity would include these key features:

1. An issue-driven academic design addressing aspects of urgent/emerging challenges/themes/issues as programs of study, grounded in approaches that center diversity, equity and inclusion.
 - a. Selection of focal themes/issues/challenges should draw on expertise from across all academic units. Themes should reflect current interest and future potential, and should be able to inspire courses and programs that have the potential to attract faculty and students from a broad range of academic disciplines.
 - i. Undergraduate: Thematic courses should align with USD's Core Curriculum, which includes mission-centered requirements for Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice as well as Integration at both introductory and advanced levels. These Core attributes are connected to the fundamental purpose for which this entity would be created.
 - ii. Graduate: Programming should be developed in consultation with various graduate units in ways that create opportunities for graduate students to participate in substantial ways.
 - iii. Access: To achieve broad participation, access to programming by various audiences is paramount. This programming could use a number of methods to create widespread access, including online methods as well as in-person opportunities.
 - b. Entity would serve as a hub for engagement with the selected themes/issues/challenges, with connections to faculty, students and staff outside the entity who also are doing research, offering classes, engaging with community partners, etc. Thus, the entity provides a nexus for themes/issues, not an exclusive silo.
2. Central administration of the entity with dedicated director(s) and an organizational structure that minimizes bureaucracy and facilitates collaboration.
3. Faculty engagement will require a structure that facilitates easy participation
 - a. Would include release time from primary departmental/unit teaching and most service obligations
 - b. Could be in the form of an interdisciplinary fellows program with terms of two to three years
 - i. Cohort of faculty with staggered multi-year terms to work on specific theme
 - ii. Primary challenge - promotion and tenure process for faculty, especially if pre-tenure faculty are eligible to become fellows

4. Include or hire professors of practice/clinical professors/non-tenure-track faculty with appropriate expertise around selected themes. Such faculty might be included (or hired) as research fellows or possibly as part of a clearly defined career path for non-tenure-track faculty at USD, parallel to the tenure track, i.e., with ranks and potential for promotion with time and accomplishments.
5. Each program/theme would include clusters of faculty who would have access to resources, conduct research/scholarship, and offer courses, potentially connected to an academic program (major, minor, certificate)
 - a. Courses should be structured to count toward program requirements
 - i. Courses could be cross-listed across graduate and undergraduate programs
 - b. Output from programs would be public-facing, action-oriented, and include robust community engagement (to align with USD's mission and vision)
 - c. Tangible recognition for participating students – major, minor, certificate, etc.
6. Students take courses, carry out projects, participate in community engagement, etc. and are able to draw meaningful connections between disciplinary perspectives that enhance their overall body of knowledge and skills.

Recommendation 2: **Enhance International/Multicultural Programming**

As a student at the University of San Diego, you have many unique opportunities to engage in both the local community as well as international communities abroad. The University of San Diego has a well-developed menu of opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students to study abroad and develop an appreciation of cultures other than their own, and reflect on their own cultures, positionality, and identity through what McKay (2002) terms, the “sphere of interculturality.” It is important through these cultural experiences, that students can transform understandings of cultures from essentialization to an understanding of the complexity of culture as a multidimensional, fluid construct, whereby rules and meaning-making processes are mediated by the ecological contexts in which events take place (Artiles & Dyson, 2005). These understandings can further be explored through the lens of various disciplines whereby culture takes on meanings and emphases when analyzed from international, national, societal, and organizational lenses.

Consistently, more than 70% of undergraduate students study abroad at some point during their time at USD ranking the university 2nd among doctorate-granting universities according to the most recent Open Doors Report. Community-service learning is incorporated into more than 150 courses at USD and is supported by the Mulvaney Center for Community, Awareness, and Social Action. The success of both study abroad and community service learning and our unique location close to the border should be emphasized as we plan for our future excellence. To support this emphasis we have several recommendations which are explained in the following paragraphs.

International, border, and local experiences are currently documented in multiple databases. A centralized database that includes all international, border and local experiences would allow faculty, students, and prospective students to search and review all of the possible international, border, and local experiences on one platform. Currently, the local experiences are housed in a database called Collaboratory and international/global experiences are housed in a database called Studio Abroad. There are also many international, border, and local experiences that are facilitated by individual instructors and may not be documented centrally. We propose exploring the possibility of merging Collaboratory and Studio Abroad databases or another database that can encompass data required for both.

In addition, we recommend the International Center be rebranded to capture all international/global/multicultural/border initiatives. We propose three wings that to be housed here: (1) UG global studies wing, (2) GR global studies wing, and (3) UG/GR local/border community-engagement Wing (e.g., CASA, Tijuana Hub, Changemaker Hub). An interdisciplinary committee can convene to ensure the experiences align with the mission/vision of the university and meet the learning objectives set forth by the respective disciplines. This committee may also look into measuring/assessing student transformation and growth from engagement in all these international/global/multicultural/border experiences. The frameworks of cultural proficiency (Lindsey, 2017), cultural intelligence (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008), and/or metacultural competence (Sharifian & Jamarani, 2013) may be useful in designing learning outcomes for students engaging in these experiences.

Building on the strong study abroad and community-service learning opportunities we recommend including multicultural/international experience as a requirement for all Undergraduate and Graduate students. At the undergraduate level this could be incorporated into the degree requirements within the Passport/Compass/Connect Programs. , At the graduate level, each discipline would determine the criteria and a documentation for ensuring students successfully complete the requirement as part of their study, however, implementation would be program specific. This may require (1) conversations around types of global/local learning experiences and goals, (2) incentivizing course-based projects, field placement with community-based engagement. This could perhaps take a form such as an end-of-year award for the most innovative course-based projects, and (3) leveraging San Diego's location at the frontline of social justice issues (eg. immigration) to inform opportunities locally for students to fulfill their multicultural, border, local requirement.

In our efforts to support students who may not be able to travel, we recommend reducing tuition costs for those courses and expanding financial aid packages and/or donor scholarships to support airfare, lodging and boarding for students who are often unable to travel due to these costs. As an example, SOLES has initiated a school-wide scholarship fund to support a certain number of BIPOC and first-generation students as well as those who have had limited travel experiences.

Recommendation 3: **Greater Attention to USD’s Catholic Identity and US/Mexico Partnerships**

Clarifying why USD’s contemporary Catholic identity informs our teaching, learning, and innovation

USD shares the Catholic intellectual tradition with 226 other institutions of higher education in the US. What distinguishes us is our charism (a gift that makes us unique), which is to engage the world in the spirit of Vatican II. The aims of that Council continue to nourish USD’s teaching, learning and innovation: to engage the modern world, the world of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, and the world of the poor and marginalized. We do so through an acclaimed study abroad program and by being the only US Catholic university at the border—a fact that implies a calling.

USD’s charism is nurtured by the heritage and traditions of the Society of the Sacred Heart (also known as the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or RSCJs) who co-founded the Catholic College for Women alongside the Diocese of San Diego, which co-founded the Catholic College for Men (both precursors to USD, along with the School of Law). It was Mother Rosalie Clifton Hill, RSCJ, who set the foundations for the University’s commitment to, as she said, beauty, goodness, and truth; a commitment that is at the heart of our Core Curriculum. In her words: “Beauty will attract them; goodness will lead them; but the truth will hold them.”

Graduate Education at Catholic Universities

Our group felt it was important to parse out the uniqueness of graduate education at USD, which has sometimes gone unaddressed in the past. USD, like many Catholic universities in the U.S., began as a largely liberal arts undergraduate college. The College of Arts and Sciences is still the historic heart of USD, and its excellence in the liberal arts continues to inform and support USD’s graduate programs in the College and professional schools. As in many US Catholic universities, the professional schools at USD are oriented to preparing professionals for careers congruent with the charism of the founding order. The disciplines of law, education, nursing, business, engineering, and peace all share a commitment to justice and are congruent with USD’s Catholic intellectual tradition. Those of us who have taught in USD’s professional schools for many years have grappled with the goal of creating academic programs that are highly ranked alongside their secular counterparts while preserving an emphasis on values such as the dignity of the individual, both in principle and actual practice.

One of the principal goals of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was to include more involvement by laypersons (i.e., persons who are not vowed religious or priests) in the life of the Church. During the past 56 years, USD has grown into an organization almost solely composed of laypersons, with two Religious of the Sacred Heart continuing to serve on the Board of Trustees. USD is now a contemporary Catholic university that depends largely on laypeople and people of diverse faith traditions in continuing the charism of the Religious of the Sacred Heart.

Those of us in our group who grew up in the Catholic tradition are often as puzzled as our non-Catholic colleagues as to how to create and maintain a Catholic identity while teaching in graduate programs which are largely rational-technical in nature.

Graduate/Professional Education at USD

During our discussions, our group has drilled down to the following principle that seems to be guiding the “contemporary Catholic” nature of USD’s graduate programs in the College and professional schools across academic units. First, we need to point out that what initially may draw graduate students to USD’s professional schools is not confessional affiliation, but reputation. Across all professional schools, our rankings are excellent. Unlike the undergraduate students whose parents may be choosing a faith-affiliated experience for their youngster, graduate students make the choice of programs based on reputation. And that reputation goes beyond rankings in US News and World Report, which many of our graduate students are unfamiliar with. Anecdotally, USD graduate students often state that their reasons for choosing professional education at USD are that they will be treated fairly and given an excellent education for their money.

An example is the reputation of the Hahn School of Nursing within the nursing community in San Diego, in which USD’s School of Nursing is viewed as a collegial, non-oppressive environment, while still maintaining high academic standards. Nurses of color and nurses for whom English is a second language have expressed an appreciation for a pedagogical approach in the Hahn School of Nursing which is student-centered and situated in critical pedagogy. To sum up: both specific content (a focus on social justice) and process (treating graduate students with dignity) appear to draw students to USD’s professional schools. There is a striking difference between USD’s approach to teaching graduate students and the typical approach at large US research universities, which is centered on high-stakes competition and a survival ethic within an environment that is often non-welcoming to people of color and women.

We foresee a vibrant future for USD’s graduate programs in the College and graduate/professional schools. Along with an enhanced collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences, we see intra-School collaboration growing in addressing the urgent challenges of humanity, given USD’s location on the US-Mexico border. USD is in a unique position among Catholic universities in the U.S. to create an enhanced focus on border issues pertaining to social justice, including health, education, immigrant rights, and human trafficking. These foci are congruent with the original founding charism of the University and will continue to draw the talented faculty and students which make USD such a unique place. We propose a more unified model of USD in which undergraduate and graduate learning initiatives are not separate entities, but an integrated whole. The University has reached a point in its growth in which this type of symbiosis could be mutually beneficial to both undergraduate and graduate students. The sharing of knowledge, resources, and research endeavors and an enhanced sense of community for both students and faculty would be a valuable next step in further growing our University which the Religious of the Sacred Heart worked so hard to create.