

The Inclusive Triton Spirit: Academic, Artistic, and Athletic

EVC Elizabeth H. Simmons 2017-11-22

Today, we at UC San Diego are proud to be able to announce that our application for membership in the Big West Division 1 athletic conference has been accepted.

Why, you might wonder, does the university's the Chief Academic Officer see this as a notable point of pride? After all, athletics is not strictly part of the academic realm the EVC oversees....

Because our university's inclusive values are centered on our students.

In my first two months at UC San Diego, I've met students who were excited to tell me about what is important to them: the majors that drew them to our campus and the other parts of their lives that animate them and from which they derive joy.

A member of our campus's Formula Society of Automotive Engineers team, who shared their pride: In designing, fabricating, and testing an innovative open-wheel prototype race car as part of a team. In applying and integrating the lessons gleaned from so many problem sets, coding marathons, and lab exercises... and bringing those abstract concepts to life. And in competing successfully against teams from peer institutions whom they respected as worthy opponents.

A musician who spends hours learning their scores, shows up faithfully for rehearsals, and values the conductor's role as a teacher who enlightens the ensemble about the context and inner workings of each piece. Who looks forward to presenting the music in its entirety at quarter's end in partnership with the other vocal and instrumental sections – and sharing it with a large and appreciative audience of connoisseurs.

The newly matriculated fencer who at Fall Convocation already knew the exact dates of the big BladeRunner competition 8 weeks away. Who was eagerly looking forward to what this EVC (as a lifelong, but decidedly amateur fencer) knew would be grueling practices leading to sore muscles and bruised hands. Who understood that fencing is about the joy of matching yourself against another's mind. A live game of chess, if you will, played at speeds so intense that only the electronic scoring equipment knows who tagged the other first.

On this day, our fencer and their fellow athletes appreciate that UC San Diego fully supports their aspirations to learn, grow, and excel in the sport that animates them. Like the car designer and the musician, the fencer now knows that UC San Diego is a community in which they'll find outstanding coaches, peers with whom to build an excellent team, and the chance to shine in public performance and competition against the worthiest of opponents.

Our diversity of interests, backgrounds and abilities makes us stronger as an academic community. In honoring and celebrating what our peers accomplish in all the varied arenas of human endeavor and aspiration, we prove ourselves most truly inclusive. This is why I am so proud to see UC San Diego joining Division 1 today.