

# ACE INTERNATIONALIZATION LAB

American Council on Education (ACE) Internationalization Lab

Subcommittee on Enhanced Global Research Report

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## **ACE Internationalization Lab: Subcommittee on Enhanced Global Research at UC San Diego**

### ***The importance of global research for UC San Diego***

Six decades after the founding of UC San Diego, our researchers are doing work at the forefront of the most important scientific and societal issues of the day – from climate change to systemic racism to COVID-19. Since the first publication of the Academic Ranking of World Universities by Shanghai University in 2003, UC San Diego has consistently been ranked in the top 20. Our cutting-edge research is rooted in dialogue and collaboration with researchers from around the globe, which contributes to diversity of thinking, new ways to approach problems, and global understanding.

Academic research is becoming less U.S.-centric because of major investments in the internationalization of universities by Japan, Singapore, China, and the European Union, among others. At the same time, global interconnectedness makes research on different regions, cultures, economies, and political systems ever more important. Contributing to scholarship at the highest level will require an ability to connect to and collaborate with scholars and institutions across an expanding global research ecosystem at a time of increasingly complex global issues. As we look ahead, increased support for and engagement in the internationalization of research will play a crucial role in helping UC San Diego maintain and enhance our role as a great global university.

Like many of our peer institutions, our graduate students, post-docs, and faculty have deep international networks – they both come from around the world and carry out research across the globe. This creates organic opportunities for global conversations and collaborations, which will no doubt continue. The role of this subcommittee is to recommend goals and strategies to catalyze global research at UC San Diego that both leverage and go beyond the important efforts of individual researchers.

### ***Existing state of global research at UC San Diego***

International research takes many forms at UC San Diego. Archeologists, oceanographers, and development economists participate in large-scale international collaborations in the field, while historians pursue independent work in archives around the world. Scientists from across the globe come together to work in our laboratories, while political theorists and theoretical mathematicians often pursue individual scholarship but gather for seminars and conferences with international colleagues. Recognizing and understanding these many nuances to provide appropriate support across disciplines will help ensure that we remain a competitive and collaborative nexus for research, shaping scholarship globally and the international agenda more broadly.

The recommendations of this subcommittee are grounded in an understanding of the existing international research activities at the university. International collaboration is often formalized through MOUs and UC San Diego has hundreds of formal, existing partnerships across the world. Roughly half are with institutions in the Asia-Pacific region, while partnerships in the Americas represent just under a quarter of MOUs and partnerships in Eurasia represent just over a quarter of MOUs. Currently, there are only a handful of partnerships with institutions in the Middle East and Africa. In addition, there are approximately 150 active and funded sponsored research projects across 25 countries. UC San Diego Extension drives an important number of the international MOUs and clinical trials drive a substantial

portion of international sponsored research activities. Case studies of existing initiatives serve to paint a picture of the breadth of international activities.

## CASE STUDIES OF EXISTING INITIATIVES

### Kyoto University Partnership

In 1963 Susumu Tonegawa, a Kyoto University student, came to SIO to conduct research. He went on to win a Nobel Prize. A MOU was signed in 2014 driven by Japanese policies to expand international collaboration. This led to two high-level joint symposiums largely focused on biotech and the establishment of a Kyoto University Research Laboratory & Liaison Office near UC San Diego, an NIH-sponsored clinical trial, and plans for a corporate-sponsored UC San Diego/Kyoto University stem cell clinical trial.

### Border Solutions Alliance

The NSF-sponsored Alliance includes universities from the four U.S. states at the border with Mexico. The coordinating institutions have ongoing research projects with Mexican universities and frequently collaborate with government and industry. The Alliance works to create a backbone for use-inspired STEM research grounded in robust partnerships and the daily challenges faced by border communities.

### International Institute

The Institute brings together scholars with international expertise to address pressing problems and increase knowledge of international issues, from local knowledge of languages and sub-national groups to global knowledge of international systems and institutions. It funds faculty groups focused on specific themes, hosts an annual conference, and provides fellowships for graduate student research.

These three case studies exemplify different needs, scale and funding models. The Kyoto partnership illustrates large scale collaboration at the university level. The Border Solutions Alliance connects opportunities for public impact research to research funding. The International Institute is funded by UC San Diego, in recognition of the limits of the Organized Research Unit funding model in the humanities and some of the social sciences and the need to support graduate students undertaking individual international research projects.

Another important source of insight is the recommendations from the International Strategy Workgroup and the Faculty Committee on Global Affairs. In 2015, the International Strategy Workgroup identified three objectives to enhance UC San Diego's standing as a global institution: 1) Innovate in International Education, 2) Promote Global Research Collaboration, and 3) Organize to be a Global Leader. Two specific approaches to promoting global research collaboration were identified. The first was to encourage global innovation through research and education seed grants. The second was to realign campus policies to allow new forms of engagement with international research partners. The latter recommendation was a response to concerns that UC San Diego's policies governing research collaboration are more restrictive than those found at many peer institutions, which inhibits the development of robust research partnerships. It was recommended that a task force be charged with revising these policies.

Following these recommendations, the Committee on Global Affairs, a faculty committee advising the Office of International Affairs, identified a number of priorities, including affordable on-campus housing for international visitors, fellowships to support training for scientists from resource poor settings, a permissive environment for people to do global work, and country-specific point people as experts on in-country research operations. The Committee identified a lengthy list of specific pain points spanning administrative challenges, housing and hospitality, and international perceptions and expectations that will require sustained effort to achieve incremental change across the university over the medium-term.

Many of the renowned researchers at UC San Diego are already important actors globally and this subcommittee is confident that UC San Diego is uniquely placed to contribute cutting edge research to issues of global importance over the coming decades. However, while UC San Diego is highly ranked, we often punch below our weight on the global stage in terms of name recognition. In addition, there is limited support for international research opportunities for graduate students and junior faculty compared to opportunities at other peer institutions with less bureaucracy and more funding. Furthermore, we need to ensure demand from top universities around the world for investing in robust institutional partnerships and for building pipelines of talented graduate students.

### ***Goals and strategies to support global research at UC San Diego***

In response to the challenges and opportunities outlined above, we have identified three specific and measurable goals for research internationalization:

- Enhance international research opportunities for graduate students and junior researchers
- Increase interest in collaborating with UC San Diego from important national universities
- Expand participation by UC San Diego in international research consortia

If we are successful in achieving these goals, it will also increase research excellence and productivity, extramural funding, and international recognition for the impactful global research we do. It is important to note, at a time when the university faces very real constraints in terms of budgets and bandwidth, that achieving the goals will require ***high-level leadership, significant staff and faculty time, and new funding for research***. Our recommended strategies take near-term limitations into account while also thinking ambitiously about a long-term commitment to research that contributes to the public good on a global scale.

### ***Leadership: Designate a core leader for campus-wide efforts***

To achieve a new level of research internationalization there is a need for a recognized leader with access to key decision makers across campus to shepherd efforts to cut across silos, make investments, identify strategic opportunities to connect our strengths as a university to global issues, elevate promising global research, and more broadly serve as the glue for large-scale international engagement.

### ***Staff and Faculty Time: Create a working group to lower administrative barriers***

Bureaucratic and administrative challenges create important roadblocks to our faculty members' ability to carry out global research. Staff members across the university support faculty in undertaking global work and are knowledgeable about the best available mechanisms as well as the necessary changes. We recommend that the university convene a permanent campus-wide working group to act as a clearinghouse for surfacing issues, documenting country-specific knowledge, advising researchers on

best practices, and rectifying pain points. Each school and division could identify one faculty member and one staff person who excel at carrying out and supporting global research and nominate them to participate. The group would work to support the core leader for campus-wide global research efforts in removing roadblocks to ensure that future research initiatives are not bogged down by the administrative bottlenecks that currently hamper growth. Members could receive a small monthly stipend for their participation and serve for one-year, renewable terms.

***Funding: Seed new global research initiatives***

There is a need for flexible funding to build our reputation and partnerships internationally, as well as to facilitate expanded participation of our graduate students and faculty in research on international issues. We suggest a yearly call for proposals for planning grants to launch or expand global research at UC San Diego around specific regions or themes in alignment with the goals enumerated above and with a focus on initiatives that are strategic, durable, and visible. Because of the diversity of needs of different disciplines, a small, multidisciplinary group of faculty members who are campus leaders in global research would be nominated to evaluate proposals. Multiple planning grants could be awarded each year, from which one or two proposals could be selected in the following year for multiyear funding. Over the next decade, this would allow for numerous planning grants and select multi-year investments in new global research efforts that bring together resources and actors from across campus around efforts that can become institutionalized as powerful vehicles for fundraising over the medium-term.

The goals and strategies recommended by this subcommittee are designed to ensure we are intentional about continuing to attract the most talented graduate students and junior faculty by providing the necessary infrastructure to connect them to global research opportunities. This intentionality will require a significant investment of staff and faculty time across the entire university, as well as sustained high-level leadership and funding to build impactful initiatives and partnerships that can act as multipliers to the existing global networks of our faculty. The societal challenges we face necessitate these strategic investments of time, leadership, and funding to embed UC San Diego in the global research ecosystem and best position our researchers to contribute to pressing issues of global importance.