

2016 San Diego Section Scholarship Awards

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Each year, the San Diego Section of the American Planning Association (SDAPA) provides scholarships to promising university students in planning-related majors. The scholarships are funded from the proceeds of the Silent Auction and Raffle held at the Annual Awards Event and by the SDAPA. Students are recognized at the Awards Banquet. This year, SDAPA bumped up the scholarship amount to \$1,000 for each winner (from \$500 in past years), and awarded scholarships to four students instead of three, as planned. Our students have strong voices and are making big contributions. They are providing the framework for progressive, inclusive, intergenerational, and sustainable cities and communities. They are planting the seeds for greater integration and more vibrant communities. See special quotes directly from their applications ... CONGRATULATIONS 2016 SDAPA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!

Ian Francis Yu, UCSD

“Each neighborhood is comprised of vibrant peoples from various cultures that bring with them ideas that stem from their upbringing, history, and traditions, and all together, they create the incredible communities, that we have in our cities. Just as no person shares the same story as another, no two neighborhoods are exactly alike. Why, then, should planning be any different?”



Rebekka Morrison, NewSchool of Architecture + Design

“It was so fascinating to me how the built environment can greatly affect people and their social lives and to have a say in that I feel is a great responsibility. My interests in planning are various, my focus for the last four years has been on how you design and plan for children with various disabilities, specifically children dealing with sensory issues such as Aspergers and Autism.”





Genesis Hill, UCSD

“Through all generations there is something to be learned. Each month UC San Diego students and retirement community residents come together to engage in a deep and thoughtful discussion based on their life experiences. Both students and residents find commonalities and differences within their generations providing many different points of view. These new perspectives and ideas, from every generation, help us understand our needs and provide insight into our future journeys.”

Vianney A. Ruvalcaba, UCSD

“The social and environmental problems that plague our planet worry me, and the possibility of making any real change seemed impossible until I discovered urban planning. This profession has the potential to make localized positive impacts that add up to larger global strides toward a more green and equitable world, and gives me hope for the future.”



The following are excerpts from the applications from the students that received scholarships. Scholarship winners will receive free admission to all San Diego Section APA educational functions for the remainder of the calendar year and a free APA Student Membership for one year. Congratulations to each of the winners! And thank you students for continuing to expand our profession on a daily basis!

Ian Francis Yu, UCSD, Communication Studies BA, and Urban Studies and Planning BA, with a focus on Urban/ Regional Policy and Planning

“There are a series of reasons as to why I have chosen planning as my career, yet they are all central to one theme—fostering the rich tapestry of diversity in our communities.

Our world is riddled with invisible structures that uphold, cultivate, and advance particular communities, while simultaneously disenfranchise, defer, and make hopeless others. My future in planning hopes to disrupt that process, though not through the arduous task of undoing the highly intertwined, invisible and abstract systems that uphold such privilege, but by bringing to light where these structures are outright visible and in plain sight, as communicated by the built environment. I understand my potential as a planner to be a tool for the community to use, one that is filled with technical, theoretical, and professional knowledge of the field, one that is unceasingly dreaming of new ideas and new realities, and most importantly a professional that prioritizes the needs of a growingly diverse community. A planning professional should be just that, not solely a visionary that sees the realm of possibilities for our communities and neighborhoods, but an active partner with the community, that recognizes the layers of power structures and communicates with each relevant component in the planning process to ensure that historically unheard voices have a say in the decision making.

There is a TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie called, “The Danger of a Single Story,” where she talks about other people’s misconceptions on her identity as a Nigerian woman and how damaging and problematic it is to have a single and simplistic understanding of something that is incredibly robust and comprised of a plurality of perspectives and identities. That is an idea that greatly applies to communities and neighborhoods just as well. **Each neighborhood is comprised of vibrant peoples from various cultures that bring with them ideas that stem from their upbringing, history, and traditions, and all together, they create the incredible communities that we have in our cities. Just as no person shares the same story as another, no two neighborhoods are exactly alike. Why, then, should planning be any different?** My experience growing up as a queer Filipino American immigrant has allowed for me to see the beauty of diverse identities, while my upbringing in Manila and the San Francisco Bay Area has showed for me the beauty that diversity allows in the context of city life.

I hope to bring to the planning profession a new methodology in the planning approach that focuses on creating spaces based on the needs of a diverse community and creating transparency with all aspects of that process. Especially in California, where diversity is a key aspect of our identity and adds depth to our neighborhoods, a community-based and bottom-up approach in planning allows for that plurality to be seen and inspires our communities and those who visit. I hope to change the planning profession as one that paints the beauty of our diverse identities onto the canvas of the built environment.”

Rebekka Morrison NewSchool of Architecture + Design, Masters in Architecture

“I would have to say that my passion for changing things, situations and having a say in how society functions was what pushed me into architecture. **It was so fascinating to me how the built environment can greatly affect people and their social lives and to have a say in that I feel is a great responsibility. My interests in planning are various, my focus for the last four years has been on how you design and plan for children with various disabilities, specifically children dealing with sensory issues such as Aspergers and Autism.** We have ADA compliant regulations but no regulations have been set towards bettering the quality of life for people with sensory problems.

Lighting, forms, planning of spaces, colors and acoustics are major factors. So many people today are dealing with issues that have been diagnosed or not, that affect their ability to study, work and simply to function to their best ability. That I feel should be a basic human right.

Simply planning and designing in the right way can better people's lives that are faced with these issues and that is something I want to be a part of.

The issue of global warming is another reason that drove me to pursue architecture. Sustainability and recycling are challenging topics and therefore I chose to apply to NewSchool of Architecture + Design as they emphasize on teaching the methods to deal with those issues through architecture. Coming from Iceland I feel I can bring a different view to San Diego as an outsider but also as a recent and future resident that is approaching the issues that the city faces for the first time with a fresh eye. Traffic issues, housing for low-income individuals, sprawl issues and environmental factors are all exciting challenges that I look forward to tackling. Making San Diego more walk-able and safer to bicycle while reducing traffic and strengthening the transit system I feel are the most pressing actions needed today along with addressing the homeless problem. Little steps are better than no steps and ultimately it is more beneficial financially to solve these problems instead of constantly putting bandaids on them that last temporarily."

Genesis Hill, UCSD, Urban Studies and Planning

When I tell people my major, Urban Studies and Planning, most of the time they either have no idea what it entails or even means. Each time I give an explanation and a definition. Urban Studies and Planning, in my own terms, means planning and organizing a city to be both sustainable and equitable through the method of democracy. This is the simplest definition and it entails so much power within it. Although, of course, there are countless other definitions of urban planning, from highly recognized people, this simple definition is the definition I wish to hold in high regard.

My first class at UC San Diego was Introduction to Urban Planning. I was fortunate enough to be given an amazing opportunity of becoming an Undergraduate Instructional Assistant. This opportunity allowed me to give a lecture on Proposition 13 and its impact on the built environment in cities such as San Diego and Los Angeles. The class opened me up to becoming a better and stronger leader, especially in terms of mentoring other college students, my peers, on their final website projects on the two cities Portland, OR and San Francisco/Oakland, CA. My instructional aid experience brought me another great opportunity to start a program on campus, along with some classmates and faculty, the Intergenerational Roundtable Discussion.

The Intergenerational Roundtable Discussion is a program that was started to break down barriers between the younger and older generations. This program aims to build relationships between undergraduate students at UC San Diego and retirement community residents by sharing stories and experiences. **Through all generations there is always something to be learned. Each month UC San Diego students and the residents come together with a "special" topic in mind and have a deep discussion. The discussions are fluid and generate different perspectives from each person. With the success of this program, it has opened the door to considering Intergenerational Housing on campus.**

I was once one of those people who had just a general idea of what Urban Studies and Planning entailed, until I started classes at UC San Diego. To this day, I am still learning new definitions of urban planning and what it encompasses. The basis for Urban Planning is to gain every person's perspectives and use them to create solutions. As a future planner, that is exactly what I aim to do and it is proven through the work I do on campus.

Vianney A. Ruvalcaba, UCSD, Urban Studies and Planning

"I never considered urban planning as a career option before entering UCSD, but an introductory course and a little research convinced me that planning is my passion. As I delved into the profession, I found that planning is everywhere. The balance between the theoretic, statistical, design, and social aspects of planning is fascinating. Urban planning brings many disciplines together and is based on cooperation between them, as well as between individuals, which I find extremely appealing. I have experience volunteering in the cooperative and political process and helping local citizens register to vote and apply for absentee ballots. This can all be applied to planning. Planning provides simple solutions, either based on design, policy, tactical urbanism, or all three, to broader problems. The placement of a tree next to a bus stop or a community garden in a heavily paved urban neighborhood include complex processes and take much thought and cooperation to happen, but can largely improve an area, leading to an increase in the well-being of many individuals. I decided to go to college because I want to help others. Urban planning is a profession of both complex and simple solutions that feeds my passion for art, writing, problem-solving, and most importantly, helping people in need. **The social and environmental problems that plague our planet worry me, and the possibility of making any real change seemed impossible until I discovered urban planning. This profession has the potential to make localized positive impacts that add up to larger global strides toward a more green and equitable world, and gives me hope for the future.** As I explore the planning profession and the innovative solutions that other planners have created, I become more inspired to join them and professionals from other disciplines in the fight for change based on simple, scalable solutions.

The only way I can accomplish positive change and bring new ideas and solutions to planning is to excel in my education and expand my knowledge as much as possible. Every day I work to immerse myself in the traditional, historical, and technical aspects of planning while exploring the tactical, abstract, and interdisciplinary interplay that makes planning so complex. My attempts at furthering my technical knowledge through internships and research would be benefitted by this award's prestige and connections to the APA. I plan to use these tools to contribute to making the region I grew up in, a model for planning throughout the world. My home, the San Diego/Tijuana bioregion, offers natural beauty and opportunities rarely found elsewhere in the world. The challenges our increasingly dense region faces require the leadership of planners and coordination between disciplines. I want to participate in projects like roundtable discussions conducted by the Young Planners Group (YPG) to bring together all the interests in our area and make a positive impact in our built environment. I will apply my technical knowledge, passion for my community, and hope for the future to my work in this area."

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