

It Should All Look Seamless as One UC San Diego



Scripps will be an integral part of the strategic planning process led by new UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla

A good portion of Pradeep K. Khosla's belongings are still in banker's boxes stacked next to a hutch in his office, but already the important keepsakes are on display for visitors to the new UC San Diego chancellor's conference room.

Amid the engraved paperweights, the figurines, a replica pair of Mahatma Gandhi's glasses, the souvenir lunchbox that UC San Diego staff get when they win lunch with him, the yin and yang of Khosla's existence is at the center of a desktop full of conversation pieces.

One is a bobblehead doll made in Khosla's image when he was still dean of Carnegie Mellon University's Carnegie Institute of Technology, his last job. In the middle is an empty director's chair labeled "DAD," the third a figure holding a tiny placard bearing the word "Clueless." It's the item that

reminds him more of his three kids than the director's chair and the one that keeps him grounded lest the bobbleheads and other mementos made in his honor ever cause his own head to swell.

Khosla's experience receiving varying levels of deference might be just what he needs in the job he started in August. He is running a campus on the rise as an academic powerhouse but one perpetually on the verge of being humbled by budget cuts along with the rest of California's public universities. Khosla is also head of a campus with distinct identities in every quarter. Perhaps no portion of the campus carries a stronger individual identity than Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the reputation of which UC San Diego's eighth chancellor says he became familiar long ago.

In an Oct. 2 interview, Khosla discussed his vision for how Scripps should best integrate its mission into the overall strategic plan for UC San Diego. Against a backdrop of continually declining state support for UC San Diego (currently about 7 percent of the university's revenue comes from the state of California), he considered how Scripps and the campus as a whole should cope with a trend that has become a norm. Also, he explained his priority of enhancing the student experience at UC San Diego, noting that any university only exists because of its students.

"In thinking about the future, we clearly need to acknowledge and respect the past, but we don't need to be bound by the past," said Khosla. "What I mean by that is that Scripps created the seed from which UC San Diego was born. The leader of that place, Roger Revelle, was the person who defined a plan for this university. But 50 years later, the little infant has grown into an adult now and built an identity of its own. Going forward, we need to think about UC San Diego as one of the premier research institutions in the country, with Scripps being a significant part of UC San Diego."

Scripps is renowned for its research fleet, one of the largest in the world, and is set to receive another vessel, currently known by the working name AGOR-28, in 2015. But robotics made up a large part of Khosla's career portfolio at Carnegie Mellon and as a program manager at the federal Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. He expressed a special regard for robotic programs at Scripps that complete ship-based measurements. Those range from Argo, a network of ocean-monitoring floats that were co-developed by Scripps scientists more than 20 years ago, to the unmanned aerial vehicles developed by Scripps climate and atmospheric scientist Veerabhadran Ramanathan to collect atmospheric data. Such unmanned systems serve to define "what the future of science will be," said Khosla, but he noted that other Scripps programs such as the development of medicines and other natural products from the sea give UC San Diego an opportunity unique among American universities to create graduate programs that produce Ph.D.s that only it can deliver to the workforce.



Scripps's Center for Marine Biotechnology and Biomedicine, which combs the oceans for these natural therapies, combines its strengths frequently in joint research with the university's Moores Cancer Center and Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. To Khosla, it's a prime example of the natural synergies that exist between academics at Scripps and the rest of campus that UC San Diego must exploit moving forward. One of the chancellor's first stated goals is the creation of a strategic plan, an exercise of defining the university's aspirations and constraints, then setting goals that will achieve the greatest benefit to the university and the rest of society.

The common goal of academics and researchers across campus, he said, will hopefully be to contribute to a strategic plan for the university in which "we are defining UC San Diego to be the entity that is being talked about and being ranked in the top 10 of the world.

"I can see that synergy between that type of work and the work being done in chemistry, work being done in engineering, work being done in the arts and humanities. To an outsider, it should all look seamless as one UC San Diego," Khosla said.



Along with the rest of the University of California system, UC San Diego has had to balance the paring of services with increases in student fees as a response to declining help from the state of California. This year the system might face even more hard choices depending on the success of Proposition 30, a November ballot initiative that would temporarily raise sales and personal income taxes. If it fails, the University of California estimates it will have to absorb a \$250 million blow to its budget this year and \$125 million next year. That would add to a \$900 million decrease in state funding over the past four years.

Regardless of the outcome, Khosla suggested it might be time for a cultural shift in how the university thinks about the expenditures such as employee salaries that are especially tied to revenue from the state.

"I think we have to get used to figuring out sources of revenue that are beyond state revenue and a culture of thinking that goes beyond the assumption that the state is the billpayer," said Khosla.

The rethinking could also apply to private philanthropy, a revenue source UC San Diego must make a priority out of necessity.

"We've got to be focused on private support," he said. "Fundraising is most effective when you have clearly defined strategic goals. When donors see a strategic plan, they know exactly what the institution is thinking, they know where we want to go and where we're headed. That gives them a context in which to think about their philanthropy and how they want to help us succeed in our goals."

Likewise such a paradigm shift might serve the student experience, Khosla added. He took over at UC San Diego in a year that saw the Scripps library consolidated with UC San Diego's main library in a cost-cutting move. To many Scripps students, that action has added fuel to a perception that Scripps might not receive its fair share of university support.

"A clear focus is going to be what I think of as the quality of the student experience. We must train well-rounded students who think with the left and right brain, who appreciate and experience multiple disciplines – from engineering and the arts to the social and physical sciences. I've said this many times before, that the only reason we are a university is because we have students and everything revolves around their experience. With that said, one has to be reasonable and expect that resources are going to be limited and the choices we are going to make are going to be more than what we have resources for. That's what the administration does. It tries to make prudent choices while getting faculty and students involved and informed.

"I don't claim to have all the answers but I do claim to know that if I have the right process, I'll get to the right answers," Khosla added.

