



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 Friday, Jan. 6, 2023

USD Students Team Up with City of San Diego to Boost Awareness of Think Blue San Diego Initiative

STUDENTS GOT REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE DEVELOPING CREATIVE PROPOSALS FOR THE CITY’S PUSH TO PREVENT OCEAN POLLUTION

SAN DIEGO – To bolster public understanding of the importance of stormwater services to San Diego’s quality of life, the City of San Diego’s Stormwater Department partnered with the University of San Diego (USD) on a student-driven project with teams competing to create the best marketing campaign to enhance the [Think Blue San Diego](#) public education and outreach initiative.

Following the semester-long competition, five teams of communications students presented their final projects last month to an esteemed panel of judges, including City Council President Sean Elo-Rivera and Councilmember Joe LaCava. The winning team created a marketing campaign that featured a video advertisement called [“Couch: A Love Story”](#) to help educate San Diegans on the importance of properly disposing large bulk items like couches and appliances, rather than illegally dumping them in neighborhoods.

“This collaboration between the City and the University of San Diego gives students hands-on, real-world experience while the City benefits with fresh, creative ideas of young leaders,” Council President Elo-Rivera said. “Capturing people’s attention is harder than ever in our modern world, so we asked these young minds to help us share with San Diegans the simple, everyday actions we can all take to prevent ocean pollution and maintain the quality of life we all enjoy.”

Five teams totaling 45 students competed for the top prize by conducting extensive community research and then developing marketing materials – including slogans, social media content and videos – to urge San Diegans to take action to prevent stormwater pollution.

The competition began with students from USD’s Intercultural Communication class being tasked with studying one of San Diego’s six watersheds, engaging with and interviewing the diverse communities within the watershed, and then analyzing the demographics of the area. USD’s Small Group

Communication class then used that information to create marketing materials aimed at driving behavior change in targeted audiences.

The competition concluded Dec. 16 with teams presenting their final projects to a panel of judges, including:

- **City Council President Sean Elo-Rivera.**
- **City Councilmember Joe LaCava.**
- **Dr. Michel Boudrias**, Environmental and Ocean Sciences, Department and Chair of the University's Sustainability Task Force, USD.
- **Dr. Ashley Finley**, American Association of Colleges and Universities, Vice President for Research and Senior Advisor to the President, USD.
- **Jack Monger**, CEO, Industrial Environmental Association.
- **Phillip Musegaas**, Executive Director, Coastkeeper.

“This competition challenged the students to answer the question: How do I communicate with my generation about some of the problems we’re seeing today?” Councilmember LaCava said. “The winning team creatively connected how couches and other large bulky items illegally dumped in neighborhoods can pollute our streams, our lagoons and the ocean.”

The winning team – including junior Abigail Cavizo and seniors Nick Brunbach, Miriam Castanon, Katherine Ely and Kate Nielander – created a “Save The Wave” marketing campaign that focused on public education about how bulky items left outside can lead to stormwater pollution.

All students will receive a certificate from the City of San Diego thanking them for their participation. In addition, the winning team will vote their own MVP, who will be offered a paid internship at [Katz & Associates](#) for the summer of 2023.

Since 2006, Dr. Leeva Chung of USD’s Communication Studies Department and Guest Lecturer Daniel McArdle-Jaimes, a USD alum, regularly bring the workplace into the classroom by offering students practical real-world projects involving well-researched marketing, multimedia and strategic communication plans.

“My teaching pedagogy X-factor is akin to a mosaic: it is bringing in the community, workplace and alumni into the classroom to create a unique and inspiring synergy,” Dr. Chung said. “I am so grateful to have the opportunity to work with Daniel and other USD communication alumni offering students project-based learning, which is the experience of what the workplace may feel like within the safety of the classroom. We grant students the permission to exercise their emerging skills as scholars in communication.”

As part of the partnership with Think Blue, students were tasked with identifying creative ways to share with San Diegans the importance of stormwater services to San Diego’s quality of life. Recent surveys show that only 26% of San Diegans know that water flowing into storm drains goes untreated into our local waterways and, eventually, the ocean. About 80% of ocean pollution begins inland so it’s key to inform San Diegans that any trash or debris left on the ground will likely end up in the ocean if not properly disposed.

San Diego is defined by the natural beauty of its beaches and coastal waters, and keeping those precious resources clean, safe and healthy is the Stormwater Department's mission. That mission gets more difficult each year as the costs soar to upgrade and modernize the City's massive storm drain system.

While much of that system is hidden underground, obscured from public view, it is essential to the health, safety and quality of life of San Diegans. This complex network of pipes, drains and other critical infrastructure work together to help protect our environment and communities from pollution and flooding.

To learn more about Think Blue San Diego and how to implement a Think Blue mindset, visit thinkblue.org.

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