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USD holds firm on pass/fail policy

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USD will not change its Fall 2020 pass/fail policy

Vice President and Provost Gail Baker, Ph.D. sent the announcement to students on Nov. 2

TYLER PUGMIRE
NEWS EDITOR

The University of San Diego will not change the pass/fail policy for the Fall 2020 semester, according to an email sent by Vice President and Provost Gail Baker, Ph.D., on Nov. 2.

USD allowed all undergraduate students to take any USD undergraduate course on a pass/fail basis in Spring 2020, but decided not to make any changes to the Fall 2020 pass/fail policy.

Baker’s email explained why the university chose not to change its pass/fail policy and included a document that highlights USD’s rationale: being too late into the semester, grade inflation, and uncertainty about how professional and graduate schools will handle applications from students with pass/fail grades on their transcripts in place of letter grades were a few of the reasons.

Baker also said Fall 2020 was unlike Spring 2020, “which was characterized by a massive disruption in learning mode and a change in living arrangements in the middle of the semester.”

Over 1,400 students have signed a petition asking USD to extend the pass/fail option to all classes in the Fall 2020 semester.

Students can find the current pass/fail policy on the university’s website. This is the policy that has been in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Spring 2020 semester. Students cannot take classes for their major, minor, or core curriculum on a pass/fail basis, except in some circumstances where courses are only offered on a pass/fail basis. The deadline to select a letter grade or a pass/fail option for Fall 2020 has already passed.

The University Senate, which is comprised of senators elected by the faculty, the academic deans, provost, and president, a representative of the associated students, a graduate student and a law student representative, also discussed pass/fail guidelines during its Oct. 29 meeting.

Changing the pass/fail guidelines would require action by the University Senate, and the senate made the decision to not include changing the policy as an agenda item at the meeting, instead only choosing to discuss it.

The senate discussed a letter drafted by the Associated Student Government Executive Board and undergraduate students, which called for the university to implement the pass/fail option for all undergraduate courses for the 2020-2021 academic year. Students cited the compressed semester, mental health of students, and time zone sensitivity as some of the reasons why USD should allow all classes to be taken pass/fail.

Senate Chair Kevin Guerrieri, Ph.D., said students’ requests for the pass/fail option were discussed with the school’s administration.

“We heard many valid arguments in favor of not making any changes to the pass/fail option for this semester,” Guerrieri said.

Those arguments included logistical issues, already being too late into the semester, and concerns surrounding students who are pursuing post-undergraduate education, and are similar to the rationale in Baker’s Nov. 2 email.

College of Arts and Sciences Dean Noelle Norton, Ph.D., noted that USD’s pre-health advisor, who oversees students who are interested in pursuing a career in the health industry, strongly

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cautioned against students on the pre-health track taking classes pass/fail this semester.

Many post-undergraduate health science programs, along with other post-undergraduate programs, are requiring a letter grade for applications. According to Norton, some post-undergraduate health programs are even making applicants explain the modality of their classes (in-person, hybrid, online, etc.) on their applications.

“(The pre-health advisor’s) recommendation is that pass/fail would not be a wise idea for anybody with pre-health aspirations,” Norton said.

Many senators and professors expressed their sympathy toward student concerns and the stress they are encountering, and some said allowing a pass/fail option for all classes may not be the best way to remedy the problem.

Some senators recommended that the senate should start thinking about and discussing plans for the Spring 2021 semester sooner, rather than later in order to avoid this again.

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Act of intolerance involving LGBTQ+ faculty member

Faculty member in THRS department was targeted because of their sexual orientation

TYLER PUGMIRE
NEWS EDITOR

An act of intolerance targeted a member of the LGBTQ+ community and faculty member in the University of San Diego’s Theology and Religious Studies Department (THRS) on Sept. 22.

Emily Reimer-Barry, Ph.D., chair of the THRS department, detailed the act of intolerance in a written statement.

“A sign identifying a member of the THRS faculty because of the faculty member’s sexual orientation, asking why the faculty member is employed by USD, was found on the Maher Hall bulletin board on September 22 and immediately removed,” Reimer-Barry said.

The suspect is not directly associated with USD, according to Chief of Public Safety James Miyashiro. He confirmed that the suspects will face consequences if convicted. Those that are suspected of the crime have been issued nontrespassing orders.

Because the investigation is ongoing and active, Public Safety is unable to disclose more details.

In her statement, Reimer-Barry explicitly stated that the Catechism of the Catholic Church should not be targeted as a weapon of hate and that the THRS department is working to foster a more inclusive and diverse learning environment on campus in accordance with the university’s mission.

“I am proud to lead the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Diego and stand in solidarity with my colleagues against hate, bigotry, and intolerance,” Reimer-Barry’s statement said.

USD did not notify students of this act of intolerance. In the past, Public Safety has notified students of other acts of intolerance on campus, such as when stickers bearing the logo of a white supremacist group were found on campus during Spring 2020. Miyashiro explained that students were not notified because there was no direct threat toward any student, as there have been with other past acts of intolerance on campus. Faculty were also not notified, but those in the THRS department were made aware of this incident.

One year ago, a THRS professor allegedly made threats against at least four other professors.

This is the fourth act of intolerance at USD in two years. In Spring 2019, an individual called the number of the Center for Inclusion and Diversity and used repeated racial slurs, and another vandalized the all-gender restroom on the fourth floor of the Student Life Pavilion. At the beginning of Spring 2020, stickers bearing the logo The Patriot Front, a known white supremacist group, were found on campus.

In addition to the three other acts of intolerance, a first-year student was the victim of a hate crime on campus because of their gender last fall. Miyashiro did not have a reason to believe any of the acts of intolerance or hate crime are connected.
Zoom University: USD announces its continuation of hybrid learning for Spring 2021

After a promise of in-person learning for the fall semester, administration is taking a safer bet next semester, leaving it in the hands of professors.

USD’s fall semester is coming to an end, and the university has announced that Spring 2021 will be held as a combination of hybrid and remote learning environments — the teaching model adopted this past September. This implies certain classes will be taught on campus while others will continue in the remote learning setting, dependent on the course and the professor. As the nation faces its third wave of COVID-19 outbreaks, USD promises to monitor state and county guidelines for any regulation changes that could arise over the coming months.

The announcement, sent via email to the USD community on Oct. 19, stated the “Information on the instructional mode for each class will be made available to students through the ‘course search’ feature on the Student Portal by mid-November.” For students who have already registered, the instructional mode should be reflected on their schedules.

USD is far from the first university to settle on another hybrid semester. Similar to USD, universities such as Carnegie Mellon and Point Loma Nazarene University are combining online and hybrid learning environments. However, many schools across the country are refraining from hybrid learning, strictly adhering to an online curriculum. Due to the uncertainty of the pandemic and an available vaccine, institutions are hesitant to manage in-person instruction. SDSU, along with California State University’s 23 campuses have announced the majority of their classes will remain online for the spring.

USD professors teaching in the hybrid model will have an intricate setup of cameras and microphones in their respective classrooms, designed to provide a coherent learning environment for students attending class in person or via Zoom.

Charissa Noble, Ph.D., a professor in the music department, is currently teaching a seven-student hybrid course and has commented on USD’s ability to conduct hybrid classes.

“I think because USD is small and has a beautiful campus, I think we can take advantage of those things and have more hybrid classes,” Noble said. “I think we know a lot about how to stay safe and I really trust that... Con’t on Page 4
a lot about how to stay safe and I really trust that USD is following the CDC guidelines and county recommendations. As I’ve gone to campus, I’ve felt like they’ve taken a lot of helpful precautions.”

Since mid-March, the term “Zoom University” has made quite the name for itself across the country, proving to have various effects on the USD community.

“I am seeing a high level of depression and anxiety that I think is related to the online experience,” Noble said. “I don’t think we’re meant to learn this way as human beings. So my desire to meet on campus is also really rooted in a lot of my feminist ideology about the importance of the body and bodily experience. I’m really hoping that I will be able to teach a hybrid class (next semester) because I know we can do it safely with small class sizes.”

Senior undergraduate Lena Belvin is conducting research on campus and is enrolled in a hybrid course for computational physics, alongside attending her regular Zoom classes.

“I’ve done online college courses before coming to USD, so I know online classes can be done well, I know I can learn from them,” Belvin said. “But I’m not learning from most of my online classes this year because professors didn’t get sufficient training on how to teach them. The only ones who are doing well are the ones going above and beyond in learning how to do that.”

Students itching to leave their homes in hopes to Zoom and study elsewhere can reserve study rooms at USD’s Copley Library, the Law Library, and the university’s recently renovated Learning Commons. For the upcoming spring semester, students will also have the option as to whether or not they want to attend any of their in-person courses.

Belvin has met with her 14-person hybrid class in a designated room on campus every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday since the beginning of the semester. “Being able to go in person, and (the professor) has office hours outside in a courtyard, is amazing. Like it’s the only reason I’m getting through this class. I really appreciate how hard he works to keep it hybrid because I have many professors who have that option available, but how far are they gonna go to make it work?” Belvin added.

While hybrid classes have the advantage of meeting in person, the necessity to be on campus has the potential to disturb scheduled Zoom classes.

“It’s difficult for me to get to school for my first Zoom class at 7:30 a.m. just so I can be there in time for my in-person class,” Belvin added. “A lot of the time I just leave halfway through my online class right before my in-person class. And then having to follow COVID-19 procedures on campus takes time.”

Faculty and students attending classes on campus this semester are required to have their temperatures checked before entering any buildings and must socially distance while wearing face coverings. This will likely continue in January once the spring semester begins.

Although it’s safe to say most of USD’s community wishes to be back on campus in the spring, the university and all its members are learning to adapt and prioritize the health and safety. The pandemic has taken its toll on all educational institutions and while hybrid learning environments may not be the most desirable, they offer many opportunities and resources for faculty and students to use as the virus continues its unyielding uncertainty.
From USD Alum to Netflix series regular

How USD Alumna Bayardo De Murguia worked his way to land a role on the brand new Netflix series “Tiny Pretty Things”

TAYLOR DEGUZMAN
A&C EDITOR

“Ever since I was little, my dad always told me, ‘Son, work hard and be a good person. And as long as you keep doing that it will keep you going strong,’” USD alum Bayardo De Murguia said. And he did just that.

De Murguia held on to the advice his father gave him and is starring in the new Netflix series “Tiny Pretty Things.”

Before he landed his first series regular title on “Tiny Pretty Things,” and before he fell in love with acting, De Murguia was a former student and football player at USD. He immigrated to the U.S. from Tijuana, and was raised in San Diego. In choosing which college he would attend, De Murguia followed his older sister, also a USD alumni, and attended USD in 2002, a decision that changed his life.

He started at USD playing football. His second year, De Murguia decided to take a theatre class, which was the very first year that USD offered a theatre major. The class he took was a movement improv class, which he described as all the “fun stuff” you do in theatre, and from the get-go he was hooked. His very first audition was for a USD play, and he was cast. After that, he decided that he would be a theatre major and minor in communication studies. Around the time he booked the play, he quit football.

De Murguia explained that some of the coaches thought he was crazy for wanting to switch from football to acting, but overall everyone was mostly supportive.

“My coaches were for the most part very positive about my decision, and they encouraged me to take the same exact work ethic I had on the field and bring that onto the stage,” De Murguia said. “I will never forget when one of my coaches during a practice said, ‘Bayardo, you’re an actor right? You should act like an athlete.’ I’ll never forget that.”

His transition from the field to the stage was almost effortless. De Murguia explained how that big change in his life happened so seamlessly.

“Performing and playing sports are almost intertwined,” De Murguia said. “There is this performance aspect of playing sports that fits in so well with acting and telling a story in front of a huge crowd of people.”

When he was thinking about the future and what he wanted to pursue, there appeared to be several moments that came together perfectly to give De Murguia the confidence to want to pursue acting.

“The fact that I was casted in the first play I auditioned for at USD made me think that someone believed in me, and the feeling I had performing in Shiley Theatre was indescribable,” De Murguia said. “I felt so supported within the USD theatre community especially as this jockey, football player, immigrant and one of the few Latinx

De Murguia will play Ramon, a former bad boy dancer turned visionary choreographer, on Netflix’s “Tiny Pretty Things.”

Photo courtesy of Vince Trupsin

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acting and auditioning in L.A. entailed.

“The first year is usually the hardest year. Once you make it past that first year it gets a lot easier,” De Murguia said. “You see people come and go. But for me, I had to ground myself. I also found a Latinx community of individuals to lean on and gain advice from.”

After making it past the first year, De Murguia began slowly working his way up in L.A., landing commercials both in English and Spanish, and then in 2014, officially landing his first network credit, guest starring in CSI.

Although many doors may close in the acting world, a door leading one to their big break is bound to happen. De Murguia landing a series regular title in a Netflix show is a testimony to this fact.

“Tiny Pretty Things” is based on the hit YA novel of the same name, with the novel best described as Black Swan meets Pretty Little Liars. The story illustrates the world of an elite ballet academy and incorporates mystery, secrets, and suspense. De Murguia said that the show doesn’t appeal to just young adults.

In the show, De Murguia plays Ramon, a former bad boy dancer turned visionary choreographer. De Murguia explained what went into the creation and creative process of his character, Ramon.

“The creation of Ramon was so cool, it was a collaborative effort with the creators and the writers,” De Murguia shared. “The writers were all open to any ideas I had. I went into studying Cuban ballet and I was able to put research into studying real Cuban dancers.”

De Murguia described what dancing on the show was like, despite not having a dance background.

“Sometimes in the casting of dancing roles, the dancing is amazing but the acting is just okay, or the acting is amazing but the dancing is just okay,” De Murguia said. “But, they cast people who are all around great. Everyone does their own dancing, everyone is trained phenomenally, there are no dancing doubles. When you see the dancing on the show, the juxtaposition of the acting and the dancing is beautiful.”

De Murguia shared about his family’s support for his career and how his parents feel about acting.

“The wonderful thing about my parents is that they have always been supportive,” De Murguia said. “It’s funny because my family is very excited for me, but sometimes it’s a culture clash for my mom and dad because they don’t understand what is actually going on yet. Once the show officially comes out and they see it on their TV, I think they’ll finally realize how big of a deal landing this role is.”

De Murguia has come very far from playing football for USD and auditioning for his very first play ever. Landing a series regular role on a Netflix show is the epitome of his hard work and perseverance. He shared his best piece of advice that he could give to someone who also wants to pursue an acting career in the future.

“The real world of the city of Los Angeles will throw obstacles and it will honestly be tough for awhile, but if you stay focused on what you want and stay positive throughout you will definitely go very far,” De Murguia said. “When I got to LA, I didn’t have a guide. I didn’t know a soul. But, I kept chipping away, I surrounded myself with like-minded, positive people, and stayed curious, always asking questions and wanting to learn more.”

Netflix will soon announce the release date for “Tiny Pretty Things.”
Crush culture during COVID-19: Catching the love bug

First dates, kisses, and getting lovesick rather than COVID-19 over quarantine

TAYLOR DEGUZMAN
A&C EDITOR

Quarantine has lasted more than eight months. And for many, several of those months were spent never seeing daylight for weeks on end, binging more than five different shows, obsessing over ten minute ab workouts on YouTube, and going on way too many evening strolls with one's parents. While many people took this time to hide away and find their true introverted self, others found true love. Read that one more time. There are those who accepted their singleness and the fact that they would experience a global pandemic before an actual relationship, and then there are those who caught the love bug.

The relationship obsessed and those who would have a new crush every week went home and traded late night kisses for chocolate and romantic sleepovers for sleeping under the same roof as their parents. One might think that it would never be possible to live out their rom-com fantasies amidst a pandemic, however, some USD students anonymously decided to kiss and tell how they got lovesick instead of COVID-19.

*Editor’s note: names have been changed to protect identities

Swiping right on the right one

Rebekah Williams* swiped right for the very first time and took a chance on finding the one. “I was immediately drawn to the fact that his bio said ‘Always down for a breakfast for dinner date’ since I absolutely love breakfast for dinner,” Williams said. “We bonded right away and decided to meet each other in person, even though I’ve never met someone off a dating app before.”

She decided to meet up with her date in the middle of August at a beach near her house. Instead of waiting in a visible location for the date, Williams hid to the side on a bench just to make sure she wasn’t getting catfished.

“I was on the phone with my best friend because I was so nervous and I told her that I saw a super cute tall kid with a big picnic blanket setting up for his girlfriend,” Williams said. “And then he just sat there for a little and I realized ‘Oh my gosh, that’s for me.’”

Williams was being super cautious with social distancing and made sure that the date location made it possible to social distance. Her date brought an oversized picnic blanket so that they both could sit on opposite corners of the blanket and stay as safe as possible.

“He was super respectful with social distancing and brought hand sanitizer and drinks for us. I was surprised how well we hit it off on our first date,” Williams explained.

The two ended up being together for four hours in total and distanced the entire time up until the end of the date.

“He said at the end ‘I really wanna kiss you right now’ and I actually ended up kissing him and breaking the whole Amidst a global pandemic, individuals are still able to find love and romance. Photo courtesy of Jeremy Bishop/unsplash

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“I really learned that you can’t force it,” Williams said. “But, my thought process was that I wanted to see him again and so I decided to go with it and show him how interested I was.”

The two have continued to see each other over quarantine, and he invited Williams over for Thanksgiving; since Williams is from Canada, Thanksgiving is celebrated early in October. They have both met each other’s families and continue to have responsible conversations about how safe they are being over quarantine.

Williams noticed that before quarantine started, people who were going on dates would ask questions centered around who the person might be seeing or hooking up with, and now the conversation has shifted to how responsible one has been over quarantine, if they’ve been social distancing, and if they’ve had any symptoms recently. The conversation has switched from talking about STDs to talking about COVID-19.

At the beginning of quarantine, Williams had no intention of meeting anyone; rather, they wanted to get themselves in a happy, healthy place and focus on themselves before anyone else.

“Before anyone else,” Williams said. “and focus on themselves in a happy, healthy place wanted to get themselves no intention of meeting anyone; rather, they had never crossed paths. Everything felt natural between the two and they hit it off right away.

Fast forward to late June and they FaceTime again, and Capulet explained the most bizarre coincidence that occurred. “I was telling him that I was going to Williamsburg in Virginia since some of my family was moving out there,” she explained. “He was absolutely shocked because it’s where he currently lives and because the town is so small.”

Capulet practically became giddy when explaining the story of the two meeting for the first time in Virginia. “It wasn’t until we were meeting someone in a very romantic, almost straight out of the movies type of way. It was so coincidental that her and Capulet met in Virginia, “The State of Lovers.”

“I never ever expected that I could meet someone during this pandemic,” Capulet said. “I were leaning towards friends or more than friends,” Capulet said. “It wasn’t until we were watching the sunset after dinner that it felt like a very romantic, flirty scene. We ended up kissing, and both realized that we weren’t just friends and wanted something more.”

Capulet shared that she always thought of herself as a hopeless romantic and always imagined meeting someone in a very romantic, almost straight out of the movies type of way. It was so coincidental that her and Capulet met in Virginia, “The State of Lovers.”

“We still talk about how perfect everything fell together for us to meet,” Capulet explained. “Whenever I think about our story, I always think of it as there was an invisible string tying us together along.”
The Lindsay J. Cropper Memorial Writer Series welcomes Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah

Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah is the third and final writer to be featured in the Cropper Series this fall

ALENA BOTROS
OPINION EDITOR

This past summer The University of San Diego’s English Department released a statement of solidarity, vowing to “reaffirm its commitment to the enduring work of anti-racism.” The department recognizes “the unique capacity of literature to remind us of the innate dignity of all human life,” and in that, recognizes the responsibility the department has in the fight against racism.

The Lindsay J. Cropper Center for Creative Writing, established in 2004, announced that this year’s Cropper Memorial Writers Series will be “a celebration of Black creative work exclusively” in hopes to bring an understanding to a collective of human experiences.

Beginning with 2020 Pulitzer Prize winner for poetry, Jericho Brown, and later featuring the essayist and memoirist Kiese Laymon, the department ended the fall semester by welcoming fiction writer Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah.

Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah is the New York Times bestselling author of “Friday Black.” From Spring Valley, New York, he graduated from SUNY Albany and went on to receive his MFA from Syracuse University where he studied under the award-winning author, George Saunders.

On Thursday, Oct. 29, director of the series, Professor Bradley Melekian, introduced Adjei-Brenyah as “one of the most exciting young prose writers of our time.” His work has earned him tremendous acclaim.
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for the searing, unique, fantastical manner in which he addresses contemporary issues,” Melekedian said. Adjei-Brenyah began his discussion by addressing the concept of first lines of stories.

“I myself am less interested in first lines of stories and more interested in what I call first movements, that is the first movement of a story,” he said.

He defined this first movement as “the first faces and opportunities a character is made to actually do something or somehow demonstrate who they are. The first slice of characterization of a person or even a place. I am almost thinking about the first paragraph or pages in which a scene is happening and the reader is kind of amassing the store of knowledge and in “Friday Black,” to conceptualize to his audience this technique of first movements and the significance it holds.

“You are safe. You are protected. Continue contributing to the efforts by living happily, says the soft voice of the drone bird hovering only a few feet from my window, as it has been for the last forever. Since I’m the new to be read.”

“I try to make sure the journeys I take readers on won’t be trivial. I try to respect their wit and generosity. By believing this, even during the first movements of my stories, I am able to push on the language and situations and trust the reader is along for the ride.”

Adjei-Brenyah did an excellent job at discussing these techniques and then physically showing them to his audience. It became this real thing that writers are not simply learning but rather experiencing.

Adjei-Brenyah later discussed his relationship with the first story of his book, “The Finkelstein 5.” He chose “The Finkelstein 5” as the first story in his book because he wanted readers are thrown into the world created by Adjei-Brenyah, a world unfamiliar to ours, but in accepting this confusion readers become generous. Adjei-Brenyah reminded his audience that “as writers, we have to remember, it is a privilege to be read. ”

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“It has characterized what some people think of me in certain ways,” he said. “I am sort of like, in some minds, a race writer. In some ways I love it for that, but in some ways that can be frustrating.”

Since its inception in 2004, the Cropper Center has prioritized bringing a diversity of voices to our campus at the University of San Diego. This year the Cropper Series chose to celebrate Black creative work exclusively. In Spring 2021, the Cropper Series will welcome our very own faculty member, poet Alexis Jackson.
Students Weigh in on the Struggles of ‘Zoom University’

This semester has been a learning experience for every student at USD. We have all had to Zoom in from all over the world to our classes and meetings and deal with the loss of not getting to experience all of the aspects of campus life that make life at USD so enriching. Many students have been unable to even study on campus as they are back home living with their families in their hometowns, and have struggled finding a distinction between work and relaxation.

Students have been trying to keep up with a standard workload during a shortened semester. Dealing with a global pandemic when leaving your home is already a challenge has taken a toll on many students’ mental health, making it even more taxing to keep on top of assignments and rigorous class schedules. Being surrounded by your peers and experiencing the highs and lows of college together is both motivating and comforting — something students have missed out on this fall semester.

Some USD students shared what has been the most difficult part of this academic year for them so far, and this is what they had to say:

“Doing online school in a different time zone and training for cross country solo.”
Emma Saylor, junior

“No separation between work and relaxation. There’s no way to get a break from school.”
Sofia Ward, junior

“No separation from our computer screens.”
Rachel Shellstrom, junior

“This transition as a freshman has been the hardest. Especially with corona.”
Isabella Bertolozzi, first-year

“Not seeing people. Luckily I live with my best friend but it’s tough to balance being safe and social.”
Emily Norris, senior

“Working to provide for my family while managing six classes and endless homework.”
Megan Valadez, sophomore

“Instead of having us do exams, midterms, and quizzes during class time, professors make us take them over the weekend. We still have classes when we have an exam too, so we are spending a lot more time on the weekends doing these exams on top of our homework, which has also increased drastically.”
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With the spring semester on the horizon, it is important that students take what they learned from this year and prepare themselves for another semester of Zoom University. Mental health struggles can be a grave impediment to learning and academic success, but USD has mental health counselors readily available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help with the emotional, relational, and psychological well-being of students and to help with urgent mental health concerns. They can be reached by calling 619-260-4655 and pressing 1.

Students can also schedule a telephone mental health appointment by visiting their online USD MyWellness portal using their MySanDiego login.

Spread by Tori Tanigawa/ The USD Vista; Content by Brittany Lang/ The USD Vista
Trump has let us doubt our Democracy. Let’s take back the power

We have little reason to doubt our election laws or voting infrastructures

BAYLYNNE BRUNETTI
ASST. OPINION EDITOR

With the tumultuous election finally here, Americans are antsy, and frankly terrified, for a multitude of reasons. The uncertainty of who will win, claims of voter fraud, fear of Trump refusing to leave office, Bush v. Gore coming back to haunt us — all of this has trapped us in a nightmare that none of us seem to be able to wake up from. We have been through a lot in the past four years in terms of political turmoil, political movements, and a worldwide pandemic. It is not productive for me to write in fear of what happens if President Trump refuses to step down from office if he is voted out. That dialogue will fuel the doubt that our election. This is all a ploy to continue to drive fear into our nation to keep up the dramas. This country is not a reality show and it is time to let us get back to the issues that matter. Contrary to his belief, Trump does not have the power to declare our election fraudulent, demand for a recount of votes, or refuse to leave office.

According to Casey Dominguez, Ph.D., a political science professor at University of San Diego, there is a constitutional remedy for a President who refuses to leave office and accept the results of an election. That remedy consists of the House of Representatives choosing the next President, if absolutely necessary. Each state delegation in the House would receive one vote. It is otherwise known as a contingent election. However, this constitutional protection will likely not have to be used, because we will probably not need it.

Even with the various forms of voting taking place during this election, it is more than likely that we will know the election results by the end of the week. This fear that our

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electorate systems cannot handle influxes of mail-in ballots is an insult to those who work hard in these institutions. Plenty of states, such as Oregon, have had mail-in ballots as their primary voting source for years. This is by no means a new, experimental method of voting.

It is also improbable that the Supreme Court will become involved. The case of Bush v. Gore has been brought up recently in regards to this election going to the Supreme Court. First and foremost, let’s break down what Bush v. Gore was about. In the 2000 presidential election, candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush had a very close election in the state of Florida. The Gore campaign advocated for recounts of all undervotes, which are ballots that the voting machine had missed, and the Florida Supreme Court granted a recount of those votes. The United States Supreme Court granted an emergency stay to the Bush campaign, who had been actively seeking to stop the recount. An emergency stay is used to temporarily stop a judicial proceeding. In this case, this was the Gore campaign suing for a recount of votes. Due to the different standards of counting ballots that each county had, the Court ruled that this was a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This halted the recount and allowed Bush to win the election. This case was a rare occurrence in our democracy and has little implication in this election. The Supreme Court even stated that this case should not be used as precedent. So, it is not likely this will ever occur again and should not be used as a grounds of fear to cast doubt in this current election.

The fact of the matter is that on election day, votes will be tallied. The states will certify their elections and their votes. On Dec. 14, the Electoral College will cast their votes and we will officially have either Donald Trump as president for four more years, or Joe Biden will be the new President of the United States. The drama that has unfolded around this election plays into the reality show dialogue that Trump has spewed for the past four years. Our election systems can handle mail-in ballots, early voting, absentee ballots and in-person voting. We are stronger than the fears that have been controlling us.

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The views expressed in the editorial and op-ed sections are not necessarily those of The USD Vista staff, the University of San Diego, or its student body.
A letter from the editors

A reflection on the Fall 2020 semester from our newsroom

THE EDITORS
THE USD VISTA

To the University of San Diego community,

Today, Nov. 3, 2020, marks not only the beginning of a new four-year period in the American political cycle but also the last production day of The USD Vista for the fall semester. Today marks both a beginning and an end, an opportunity to confirm values or proclaim new ones.

This online and socially distant semester has given us an opportunity for self reflection. Today, we want to take the opportunity and use our platform to reiterate the mission, values, and purpose of USD’s student newspaper.

The USD Vista’s mission is to serve the USD community through seeking truth and reporting it, enhancing civic discourse on campus, and holding those in power accountable by communicating important news to the campus.

We are a small newsroom made up of 12 editors and a team of volunteer assistants and contributors. We’re undergraduate, full-time students from different majors and backgrounds. Every article goes through an intensive editing process over the course of a week: from the time a story is pitched to when it’s published, a section editor, our executive editors, and our advisor look over it to ensure accuracy and journalistic quality.

This past semester has made our work more important than ever as college newsrooms bear a heightened responsibility. Amidst a global pandemic, an election cycle, and a semester consisting of ever-changing rules and regulations, accurate information is more important, and more difficult to find, than ever. Nationwide, it is now commonplace to dismiss information based solely on whether its source comes from an opposing political background. As student journalists, we see this pattern and strive to find a way to bridge this gap on our own campus.

As a news source for USD and San Diego, we believe it is our duty to seek out and lift up community voices, especially the voices of those who are too often marginalized and oppressed. We want to reiterate the editors’ full support for the Black Lives Matter movement and emphasize that we denounce racism. The USD Vista will never publish a news article or opinion piece that encourages, calls for, or incites discriminatory action.

We strive to be a platform and resource for the USD community to voice their stories and cultivate meaningful conversations by highlighting diversity of thought and enriching the USD student experience.

Students are the reason why we are able to publish a newspaper every week. $14 of student fees each year goes toward USD Student Media; in return, we try to report important information to the USD community to make the cost of two Tu Merc sandwiches worth your while.

Student tuition and fees fund this campus: they pay the administrators that make decisions about your education, provide the Associated Student Government with a $1.3 million budget to represent student wants and needs, and fund our journalism to hold the aforementioned parties and others in power accountable. In the microcosm of our relatively small campus community, it is our responsibility to make sure students, faculty, and staff are well represented and well served by those in positions of power.

Whereas our news section is aimed at objective storytelling, and our feature section looks to uplift community stories, it is our opinion section where we strive to express the diverse thought on our campus. In Spring 2019, we changed the format of our opinion section to allow students to speak with their own voice on issues they believe to be important to the USD community through op-eds.

We are not a perfect news organization and never will be. We understand and acknowledge the institutional racism that is pervasive in American media institutions, and we have made efforts to encourage more diversity in our newsroom.

During the 2018-2019 school year, 17% of The USD Vista’s editors identified as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). This year, 42% of our editors identify as BIPOC. We have made a concerted effort to increase our coverage of BIPOC experiences on campus, as well as increasing outreach to student organizations to write guest opinion pieces.

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in order to encourage diversity of thought.

Regardless, we understand that there is always more work to be done in our efforts to create a more diverse and inclusive newsroom.

Our fundamental values of accuracy, transparency, and professionalism guide our journalism. We value and welcome feedback, criticism, and critique from the USD community. These things make us better. And as college students, our first and primary goal is to learn.

After we ran an op-ed that sparked a lot of discussion within the USD community, several students and members of our Associated Student Government criticized the fact that we did not make it abundantly clear that the article was an opinion piece and that the views expressed in the editorial and op-ed sections are not necessarily those of The USD Vista staff, the University of San Diego, or its student body. We recognized this concern and critique, and adjusted how we display our opinion pieces in our online articles, social media, and our newsletter.

At a certain point, however, we must draw a boundary between constructive criticism and attacks on our organization and staff members. This is a fine and delicate line to draw, but we must draw it.

Two years ago, The USD Vista ran a news article covering a protest near campus. In response to this article, stacks of newspapers began disappearing from campus, and the author of that article received death threats.

We bring this up not to dwell on the past, but to provide context as we try to move forward.

In a meeting with and hosted by Associated Student Government members on Oct. 15, we discussed this article and its impact on that writer. In that meeting, an ASG senator told our staff that we should expect to receive death threats because we work in the media industry.

No student on our campus should receive death threats. No student on our campus should expect death threats because of the organizations they participate in. And no student, especially elected officials of our university, should tell others that death threats are to be expected because they want to work for the school newspaper, TV, or radio station.

Student government officials have also called for the censorship of an op-ed, “prioritizing shutting it down as soon as possible.”

No one has to agree with opinion pieces in our newspaper; that is not our goal in publishing them. They serve to encourage discourse and conversation.

Calls for censorship, especially by a governing body, violate basic principles of the freedom of speech and the press. These calls, even if not acted upon, interfere with our ability to fully perform our roles as journalists and uphold our duties to this campus.

Statements like these undermine our position as a voice for USD students. Condemnations of student voices in the opinion section dissuade others from utilizing that platform to speak on issues important to them. Implying that death threats are commonplace for media industry workers deters students from entering our newsroom and adding their unique background to our production process.

Student government officials set the standard for student conduct on campus. Insensitive statements like these make it difficult to do our jobs of uplifting student voices, and achieve our goals of maximizing student inclusion. These statements cross the line; they are not constructive criticism, they are unacceptable actions toward our staff and organization.

USD’s Mission Statement affirms that “The University values students, faculty and staff from different backgrounds and faith traditions, and is committed to creating an atmosphere of trust, safety and respect in a community characterized by a rich diversity of people and ideas.” It is not only our job to give a voice to students, faculty, and staff of all backgrounds, but also to maintain a healthy relationship with the community we serve and represent. We cannot maintain that relationship, nor can we effectively do our job when that atmosphere of trust, safety, and respect does not exist.

This is the final issue of The USD Vista we will publish in 2020. When we return in 2021, our world will be different. Perhaps it will be for the better, perhaps for the worse. No matter what, when we return, we will do so with the same dedication to producing quality journalism, the same desire to serve our community, and the same commitment to our values as before. That dedication, desire, and commitment is what drives us. It always has been, and it always will be.
Women’s basketball ready to run it back

Toreros aim to build on impressive 2019-2020 season

ERIC BOOSE
SPORTS EDITOR

The University of San Diego women’s basketball team was seconds away from a conference championship last season. Had the Portland Pilots not hit a last-second shot in overtime, the Toreros would have won the West Coast Conference tournament and carried momentum into March Madness. But the Pilots hit the shot. And the Madness never happened, not for anyone.

After coming so close last year and having their spring and summer disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Toreros are finally back in the gym, getting ready to make another run for the postseason. As is the nature of college basketball, head coach Cindy Fisher will have to put together this year’s run without some key players from last year.

“We lost five seniors last year, and three of them were post players who played a lot of minutes for us,” Fisher said. “I think that is the biggest difference in our team this year, our guard play is pretty experienced and pretty veteran, but I think the new faces in the program and the new players who will be out on the court is really the difference in the team.”

San Diego’s veteran guards are a trio of seniors — Jordyn Edwards, Syndey Hunter, and Myah Pace — all of whom featured prominently in last season’s run to the conference tournament finals. Fisher explained that all three guards, especially Pace, have could have been on that preseason list,” Pace said. “And that is part of my focus, we put in the work, we shocked a lot of people last season, so I really want to be a great leader for my teammates and for my teammates to get the recognition that they deserve going through this season.”

Pace also said that her selection to the all-conference team did not put any pressure on her. “I think that our team dynamic, there are so many strengths all over the board, so as long as I take care of doing what I can to help my team, everyone will do what they individually do best, and we’ll go from there,” Pace said. “I don’t feel any pressure, I feel comfortable being a leader on this team, I feel like my teammates have got my back, so I’m just ready to go.”

Fisher echoed Pace’s sentiment that the Toreros have talent in every position this season, thanks to a balance of their veteran guards, players returning from injury, and talented newcomers. Redshirt-junior forward Kendall Bird, who missed the 2019-2020 season with an ACL injury, is healthy and set to get minutes playing in the post this season. First-year center Laura Erikstrup will look to fill the role of Leticia Soares, who made more baskets than any other Torero last season, and junior Steph Gorman, who transferred to San Diego from Utah State, will join USD’s formidable guard rotation. Gorman led the Aggies in assists and three-pointers made last year, providing 85 helpers and shooting

“In this conference, you have to be ready and you have to be prepared every single night.”

- Coach Cindy Fisher

“it is just a matter of working through this pandemic and ... trying to stay as healthy as we can so we don’t get hit with people going out mid-season”

- Coach Cindy Fisher
32.4% from beyond the arc. Fisher emphasized the importance of her team's depth, especially with uncertainty due to COVID-19 still looming.

"With the year being so different, everybody realizes that everybody is going to play, and we need a lot of depth, we need people who can rotate positions," Fisher said. "So, I think there is that excitement of knowing, 'I'm going to be on the court and give everything I can, and then someone else is going to come in and give everything they can.'"

And Fisher noted that COVID-19 will continue to influence the season beyond the changes it has already caused. To make it back to the WCC championship game, Fisher’s Toreros will only have to dispatch teams like BYU and Gonzaga, they will have to take care of themselves.

“It is just a matter of working through this pandemic and what that looks like and trying to stay as healthy as we can so we don’t get hit with people going out mid-season, losing a couple games here and there because of what can happen,” Fisher said. “And that is a tough thing, we’re social people, we’re used to being around each other and having that social interaction, and as a team, that’s what you build your success on.”

If the Toreros can meet the challenge off the court, they will have to surpass expectations on the court to make it to another final. In the preseason coaches poll, San Diego, the second-best team in the regular season last year, was picked to finish fourth in the WCC, behind Gonzaga, BYU, and Portland. While Fisher emphasized that all 16 conference games matter, her team would love to get revenge on the Pilots.

“In this conference, you have to be ready and you have to be prepared every single night,” Fisher said. “For our team, probably, they have circled every game, with Portland having a highlight behind it.”

Pace explained that the team, especially the returning players, are hungry to get another shot at the trophy.

“I think that is definitely fuel for our season, to get back to that spot and then to take it all is the goal,” Pace said. “It’s definitely something that we will put up in our locker room, that will keep us focused when there’s a tough practice or a tough game. I understand it’s a marathon, the season is long, that’s definitely the ultimate goal, to get back to that championship game.”

While Pace and her teammates are ready to start running that marathon, there is still some question as to when the race will start. San Diego’s first WCC matchup is scheduled for Dec. 28, almost a month after college basketball games are allowed to start.

As of Nov. 3, no non-conference games have been officially confirmed by USD, but the team is finalizing some games, according to Fisher.

“As of right now, Nov. 28 we have Santa Barbara at our place to kick off the year, followed by San Diego State after that,” Fisher said. “Hopefully we will get to go on the road over to Arizona State, which will be a big game for us. Right now, it’s just changing every day depending on what’s going on with non-conference schools and if they can play, how many they can play, so it’s a work in progress, but we feel like those three or four that I mentioned are pretty locked in right now.”

Regardless of how many games USD plays before their conference opener against Santa Clara, Fisher says that her team will be ready when they take the court for that game on Dec. 28.

“Our team is really excited, and they’re ready to go, they’re looking forward to it,” Fisher said. “In general, sports this year are going to look different than they’ve ever looked, but it’s a time to grow as individuals, fight through some adversity, be resilient, look at the glass half full, and take what we have and make the most of it.”

**SPORTS**
Little went right for the University of San Diego's men's basketball team last season. Coming off of a highly productive 20-15 season the year before, last year's Toreros were hungry for even greater success. But any postseason aspirations were dashed by a mere 9-23 overall record with only two of those nine wins against conference opponents. The first round defeat at the hands of the 11-20 Loyola Marymount University in the West Coast Conference Basketball Tournament was the final nail in the proverbial coffin of the 2019-2020 Torero men's basketball season.

“We talked too much about results,” Scholl said. “We talked about, at the beginning of the year, us taking our step and the trajectory in the history of the program. But we didn't talk a lot about how that was going to happen and the process of it all … We set goals of another twenty-win season, being a postseason team again, and focus a lot on the results and not so much on the process.”

Tactically, returning redshirt junior Joey Calcaterra pointed out an offensive strategy that was outdated.

“We had a system on our offensive side that just wasn't meant for the players that we had on our team,” Calcaterra said. “We had a lot of new guys come in last year and it was an offense that had been here for three years before last year. So it wasn't the right fit for these guys. But coach Scholl and the coaching staff did a great job this off season figuring out a new offense that will fit our guys better and lead us to be more successful.”

But while the legacy of last season casts a long shadow over the future of USD men's basketball, a new chapter is set to begin at the end of December. The opening of the 2020-2021 season presents a challenging road to redemption for USD. According to coach Scholl, the Toreros are set to play nine non-conference opponents on top of 16 WCC matchups. Having finished 2-14 in conference play last year, USD will have a tough time battling to prove people wrong, having been picked to finish ninth out of ten teams in the preseason WCC coaches poll.

On top of the highly competitive schedule that includes collegiate basketball giants like No. 1 Gonzaga, the Toreros will be battling another, even more dominant opponent: COVID-19.

“We tell the team this every day, that we have two competitions on our schedule: we have the teams that we are supposed to play and COVID,” Scholl said.

“This team has a completely different spirit about them. A spirit of connection.”

- Coach Sam Scholl

Senior Josh Parrish, who transferred to San Diego from Rice University in Texas, is part of a group of talented new players for the Toreros this season.

Photo courtesy of USD Athletics

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"And in our competition against COVID, we are the underdog every single day. Every day. And we are trying to beat the favorite. And because COVID is overwhelmingly favored in this season that we're going to be grateful for every opportunity that we get to be on the floor practicing together, and every opportunity that we get to play somebody else."

With the unique challenge of the upcoming season before them, the Toreros set out to get competition ready. Their preparations began with the implementation of a new mindset that Scholl is confident will lead to a more successful season.

“We've learned a lot from that, I've learned a ton from the past year and we've got a completely different approach going into this season,” Scholl said.

One of these promising newcomers is the 6'7” sophomore forward Yavuz Gultekin who transferred from Texas A&M. Gultekin and the rest of the new personnel have brought with them a new drive and understanding of what it takes to win. However, despite the strategic, mental, and personnel changes the team has made in preparation for the upcoming season, there are still those that doubt the capabilities of this USD men's basketball team.

“We didn't do our part in proving the doubters wrong,” Calcaterra said. “But they aren't in the gym with us, they aren't watching us work and watching us practice, so they don't really know what we've been doing and how much we've improved since last year, so we are just eager to go out and show it.”

Ultimately, how the 2020-2021 season will fare for USD is unknown, and with the shroud of a global pandemic constantly looming, what the next couple of months of basketball will look like is up in the air. But coach Scholl and the Toreros are confident their team will return to courts better than ever.

“This group is ready to be the best version of themselves,” Scholl said. “(This team) is ready to build together as a group and accomplish some great results because of that process … We are going to define who we are by our play and by how we compete.”

Torero fans will get to see just how well their men's basketball team competes with the tip off of the 2020-2021 season as USD travels to face the University of San Francisco on Dec. 31.