



San Diego Dialogue

*Increasing Competitiveness and Prosperity
In the San Diego/Baja California Metropolitan Region*

Backgrounder

San Diego Dialogue is a non-profit organization working to increase competitiveness, prosperity and the quality of life for the greater San Diego/Baja California region by promoting regional crossborder collaboration and innovation. Though self funded, Dialogue is affiliated with the Division of Extended Studies and Public Programs at the University of California, San Diego. Building on past programs, the Dialogue recently introduced a new initiative to help enhance global competitiveness in the crossborder region in science and technology-based industries. The Dialogue is spearheading an effort to obtain funding for the creation of the world's first dedicated Crossborder Innovation and Competitiveness Center along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Mission

The Dialogue's mission is to enhance the quality of life in the San Diego - Baja California metropolitan region by tackling the important policy issues related to the area's pressing economic, social and environmental concerns that affect the lives of those on both sides of the border. Through engaged discourse, consensus building, directed research and cooperative programs to increase regional competitiveness, the San Diego Dialogue not only finds solutions to existing challenges, but uncovers new opportunities to raise the standard of living throughout the region, both now and in the future.

History of The Dialogue

San Diego Dialogue was founded in 1991 by UCSD's Chancellor, Richard Atkinson, and UCSD Extension Dean Mary Walshok. They recruited Charles Nathanson to be executive director and William J. McGill, a former UCSD chancellor and former president of Columbia University, to chair the board. The focus of the Dialogue from its early days was to provide a forum for leaders in the region to meet and discuss the best ways to encourage sustainable growth and explore mutually beneficial policies related to joint economic, environmental and educational interests. Early in these discussions, the inextricable links within the San Diego/Tijuana region became clear. San Diego Dialogue evolved rapidly as a crossborder resource and soon began conducting pertinent research programs and issuing reports on critical regional issues. The Dialogue has expanded its membership to include more than 130 leaders in government, business, academia and the media and other distinctions from both sides of the border. As it enters its fifteenth year,

the Dialogue continues to provide a rich array of forums, programs and focused research in its mission to enhance regional prosperity.

Spurring the InterAmerican Growth Economy

The San Diego/ Baja California border region is experiencing tremendous growth. Together, San Diego County and Baja California is home to approximately 6 million citizens, nearly evenly divided among the two. Today, citizens who live on both sides of the border pass each other every day during commute hours.

The phenomenon of cultural and economic blending is accelerating, particularly as a growing number of visionaries seek new ways of growing innovation and competitiveness in the border region while simultaneously improving the quality of life. With burgeoning industries in medical devices, aerospace, high technology and biotech north of the border, and continued growth and investment in manufacturing plants, clean rooms and fabrication houses in Baja California, there's a natural symmetry between the two sides. In addition, Tijuana and Baja California provide an excellent manufacturing base for San Diego-based corporations specializing in the semiconductor, software, aerospace, automotive and other fields. The Dialogue serves as a catalyst to form new collaborations and stimulate investments on both sides of the border.

Such opportunities, however, do not come without considerable challenges, particularly in this age of terror alerts and calls to strengthen our borders. In addition to normal business considerations, such as transportation, security, and communications issues, there are also cultural differences, binational legal aspects and political elements to consider. San Diego Dialogue plays a vital role in uniting different constituencies toward action through its forums, research programs and publications.

Innovative and Collaborative Programs

As its name indicates, San Diego Dialogue is best known for its forums, which allow for business leaders, elected and appointed officials, entrepreneurs and innovators on both sides of the border to meet and discuss the issues of utmost importance to the region. The forums help develop new approaches to overcoming obstacles and realizing opportunities through shared research, consensus building and by exchanging ideas. These include public forums, such as Forum *Fronterizo*, and invitation-only workshops, roundtables and community discussion groups. Dialogue also facilitates brainstorming sessions that ultimately generate new initiatives to improve the region's prosperity and overall quality of life.

Forum Fronterizo

Forum *Fronterizo*, a luncheon series established by the Dialogue in 1997, is the premier venue for discussing cross-border policy issues of the San Diego/Baja California region. Typically attended by hundreds of thought leaders from government, business, education, and other civic-minded communities, each forum addresses a unique topic. The series has featured well known

speakers such as past U.S Attorney General Janet Reno, former U.S. Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson, Mexico’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs José Angel Gurría, and Mexico’s Secretary of the Environment Julia Cararbias.

Life Sciences Gateway Initiative

With the support of the global pharmaceutical firm Merck & Co. and its subsidiary, Merck, Sharp & Dohme México, San Diego Dialogue launched a two-year initiative to link health and life science research and enterprise between Southern California and regions in Mexico. The project is designed to build sustainable binational relationships among researchers, scientists, and investors for the purposes of stimulating and nurturing the lifecycle of innovation from research to commercialization.

The partnership with Merck is an outgrowth of the *Borderless Innovation* report, which included recommendations for expanding existing and new crossborder education and research linkages that will enhance the global competitiveness of high technology industries in California and Mexico.

The Crossborder Innovation and Competitiveness Initiative

San Diego Dialogue’s Crossborder Innovation & Competitiveness Initiative was a two-year effort to explore the concept that the San Diego-Baja California region will be more globally competitive in key science and technology sectors by leveraging economic development opportunities linking both sides of the border – our economic linkages. This concept includes not just crossborder research partnerships (a key strength of UCSD, with its inherent R&D capabilities and access to leading technology companies), but also in catalyzing connections between the San Diego and Baja California economies in high-value added sectors that link the R&D capabilities to manufacturing and service industries in our region.

This effort culminated in the release of the *Borderless Innovation* report, which highlighted “clusters of opportunity”, and put forth recommendations for improving the global competitiveness of the San Diego-Baja California region.

Other programs have included:

- ***Building Regionalism***: brought together community leaders from San Diego County to spotlight and examine local concerns and interests, and determine to what extent they may have mutual impact on the region, ensuring smart, sustainable growth. Furthermore, San Diego Dialogue conducted workshops and small forums that addressed land use, transportation issues and future growth more directly as part of a smart growth program called *Creating Liveable Communities*.
- ***The Partners for K-12 School Reform***: the program helped examine ways to cut the disparity in academic achievement between neighborhoods and school districts by raising the learning curve among minorities and those from poorer neighborhoods through educational programs and reform, new teaching techniques, and other innovative initiatives.

- *Animating Democracy Initiative*: worked with the San Diego Repertory Theatre and *Centro Cultural Tijuana*, the initiative aims to use the theatrical arts as a compelling forum to educate and stimulate the public's interest around the pertinent issues affecting those who live on both sides of the border through the production of *Nuestro Pueblo/Our Town*.

Publications:

When it identifies potential changes in the region, San Diego Dialogue conducts extensive research and publishes reports that provide both historical perspectives and insights into how to leverage emerging opportunities long-term. A new report entitled *Borderless Innovation* is scheduled for release on January 30, 2006. It will identify the industry sectors that are primed to compete with the world. These included medical devices, pharmaceuticals and clinical trials, marine biotechnology, aerospace/defense, and software. The Dialogue will publish an ongoing series of in-depth reports on these individual industries.

The Dialogue also publishes white papers and background papers for each of its public forums and makes them available on the web site (www.sandiegodialogue.org), often in Spanish as well as English.

Leadership

Mary Lindenstein Walshok, Associate Vice Chancellor, Dean of University Extension

Mary Lindenstein Walshok Ph.D. is Associate Vice Chancellor for Public Programs at the University of California, Dean, University Extension and Adjunct Professor of Sociology, a visiting professor at Stockholm School of Economics and holds an International Appointment, Department of Continuing Education, Oxford University, Oxford, England. She is responsible for all of UCSD's outreach programs including the San Diego Dialogue, executive education, continuing professional education, UCSD-TV and a variety of community and economic development initiatives. She is responsible for a staff of 275 and annual revenues of \$37 million. Walshok is the author of two books, *Blue Collar Women* and *Knowledge Without Boundaries* (dealing with the role of research universities in the economy); over fifty published articles and book chapters as well as a variety of reports on the "new economy" and research capabilities for local and state agencies. She has helped champion the evolution of The Dialogue and leads the effort to obtain funding from government agencies and foundations to create a dedicated InterAmerican Innovation Center near the border.

Nathan Owens, Regional Policy Coordinator

Owens joined San Diego Dialogue in September 2001 after earning his Master's degree in Science, Technology, and Public Policy at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs in Washington, DC. Concurrent with his graduate studies, Nathan worked as a research analyst for a consulting firm and interned with the U.S. Department of Commerce. A California native, Nathan received his undergraduate degree in political science from UCSD.

###