

Dana Jimenez

Student Services Advisor 2

Academic Affairs: Nanoengineering

The faculty of the Department of NanoEngineering at UC San Diego would like to nominate Ms. Dana Jimenez unanimously for the Exemplary Staff Employee Award. Dana has served our community for 13 years, first in her role as Advisor for the University and Professional Studies Program (2006-2011) and then in the role of Graduate Affairs Coordinator (2011-present). Over the last 8 years, she has also served several stints as the Academic Personnel liaison, and has had to train three other “permanent” AP coordinators who have come and gone over that time. In this role, she directly interacts with all 30 faculty members in the department and around 200 graduate students in the MS and PhD programs in both nanoengineering and chemical engineering (which is also administered by our department).

Dana’s office is located immediately at the entrance of our Department and is thus the first person a newcomer or visitor sees when they arrive. While this location may have been by chance, Dana in many ways serves as the face of our Department. As the Graduate Affairs Coordinator, she is the first and last person our students encounter as they pursue advanced degrees. She welcomes other staff to the Department and is the de facto “chair” of the departmental social committee. In her periodic role as the Academic Personnel liaison, she has onboarded many of our faculty including Drs. Lipomi, Jokerst, Chen, Xu, and Fenning. She can handle this because she is dedicated to the Department. While not a scientist or an engineer, Dana believes in our field. She believes in our students. And she believes in the mission of the University of California.

Dana manifests this in both her actions and her attitudes. She champions diversity in graduate admissions and gently and firmly reminds the often all-male admissions committee to consider the full breadth of the applicant pool. She advocates for our students to make the degree program more accessible. She never argues to dilute our rigor; rather, she has an uncanny knack to see the program from a third eye beyond that of the faculty and students and suggest changes that will benefit everyone. For example, in 2016, she shepherded the first-ever redesign of the graduate core curriculum in the MS and PhD programs in nanoengineering. The Graduate Affairs Committee is now working with her to create 4 new MS degree programs in nanoengineering. This role involves market analysis, collecting student feedback, and in short, preparing a large number documents for approval by the Academic Senate subcommittee.

We know she has often helped diffuse tensions between PhD students and advisors especially around uncommunicated expectations. Prof. Lipomi has observed instances of her skills in this regard, which are critical given the higher than average susceptibility of graduate students in the STEM fields to anxiety and depression. It is our firm belief Dana’s identification of students of concern and referral to the appropriate campus services has been life-changing for a subset of our student population.

In her role as Graduate Affairs Coordinator, Dana’s “signature” events include the multi-day Graduate Orientation in mid-September and the Graduate Recruitment in mid-February. For these events—and at many other times during the year—she works well beyond the regular scheduled hours to host events for our prospective and graduating students on nights and weekends. She also organizes many of the social events in our Department including holiday potluck lunches for students and faculty, monthly birthday celebrations, and farewell parties.

Dana complements this activity with an attitude that is unbreakably positive and pleasant. She has that “can-do” California spirit that is so infectious and welcoming. She has a smile for everyone and knows how to pacify even the crankiest of students or faculty. In short, she’s exactly the type of employee we should be recognizing. She has been with UC for 13 years despite the nearly 35% annual turnover of our Department has in the business office. More practically, I know she has received several offers from other industries and institutions in San Diego. Giving her this award would be a simple and no-cost way for the University to retain a dedicated and valuable employee. Many thanks for your consideration.