



Every fall, the start of school brings along thoughts of fresh sheets of notebook paper, new classes, and a summer's worth of stories to share. After doing a little math the other day, I realized that I would soon experience my twenty-second "first day of school". Twenty-second! Am I trying to be the first Marathi doctor/engineer/lawyer triple-hyphenate, you wonder? Was I held back a few years?

After the standard thirteen years of kindergarten through twelve, I went on to college and graduate school; as graduate school was coming to a close, I realized my calling was science writing but that I had no formal training. So I applied and was accepted into UC Santa Cruz's science communication program, after having completed a bachelor's in engineering at UC Davis, and a Ph.D. in engineering at UC Santa Barbara. What is noteworthy about the mini-resume I just detailed is that I was able to find suitable programs of study for my various endeavors (and academically reputed ones at that), entirely within the UC system.

Founded in 1855 as the College of California in Oakland, the visionary trustees of this College purchased 160 acres of land in then-rural Berkeley, establishing a complete University of California in 1868. From this core, a medical branch was opened in San Francisco five years later and a university farm was established to study agriculture in Davis. Recognizing the need to educate Southern Californians, the trustees opened a southern branch, leading to the formation of UCLA. Citrus and marine experimentation

centers developed in the early 1900's led to UC Riverside and UC San Diego, respectively; by the late 1950's, UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, and UC Irvine had been established as well. This fall, UC Merced opened its doors as the first American research university of the 21st century.

Inherent to its design, no two UC campuses are alike, making it easy to find the one that best fits your inclinations. For example, UCSC gives a near-liberal arts college experience (without the east coast weather); UC Berkeley and UCLA are world-renowned powerhouses and have football teams. UC Davis offers a rural, small-town feel; UC Irvine gives you a chance to attend school in The OC. UCSB and UCSD stagger you with their preternatural beauty (and I'm not just talking about the ocean); UCR's mascot is the Highlander. UC Merced is a short drive from Yosemite; UCSF, although lacking an undergraduate curriculum, has a rather well-reputed medical school. From exercise science to political science through materials science, nearly any major you could dream of is available at one of the ten UC campuses.

As many of you begin to consider colleges to apply to this winter, don't overlook what the UC system has to offer. Although your family may gently suggest that you attend one of the well-recognized private schools in the nation so they can boast to their friends (I call this the "cocktail factor"), keep in mind that the UC brews a formidable blend of cutting-edge research, affordable tuition, and academic excellence. And not just that "dedication to excellence" you hear about at some

aunty's Diwali/25th wedding anniversary party. Actual excellence. For those of you who thrive on statistics (also known as counting), the UC Faculty consists of 28 Nobel Laureates, 19 Fulbright Scholars, and 25 MacArthur Fellows. UC researchers crank out three new inventions every day. Each campus offers full scholarships and/or financial aid, despite the reasonable tuition rates. Beyond undergraduate education, the professional and graduate programs are comparable to, and often times

better than, their private school counterparts. This academic cred is balanced with Division I through III athletics, a diverse student population, and countless student organizations (and if it's not available, you can start your own Marathis Against Killer Android Drones club, too). As Californians, we are fortunate to live in a state with such wonderful educational opportunities, and it is ultimately your decision where to go to college. Successful alumni ranging from Gordon Moore to Jack Johnson suggest that there is a UC to achieve your dreams. Good luck to you all, and fiat lux.

Caption :

Dr. Aditi Risbud recently completed her Ph.D. in Materials at UC Santa Barbara. Her dissertation research involved the study of magnetic semiconductor materials for spintronics, or spin-based electronics, applications. She is currently enrolled in the science communication program at UC Santa Cruz. This program combines courses in writing and editing with internships in the Bay Area. Her fall quarter internship was at Stanford's Medical Center.

■ ADITI RISBUD

