

Dear UDA families,

This is the first of what we hope to be regular updates about the activities of the UDA School Advisory Council (hereafter SAC). Our group, formed in spring 2014, consists of parents elected by parents, faculty, and Dr. Taylor. We meet monthly to provide input on academic goals at UDA and how these goals are evaluated. If you are interested, you can check out SAC bylaws here:

<http://urbansd.com/cms/lib6/CA01000994/Centricity/Domain/79/UDA%20SAC%20ByLaws.pdf>.

Initially, we focused largely on three fronts. First, we refined the UDA parent survey that was made available to parents in Spring 2014 and again in Fall 2014. Thank you for your participation. We used survey results to identify UDA's major strengths and areas of growth. The response rate was great and the school is listening and responding to these concerns. Second, we helped develop UDA's new Student Learner Outcomes. These are major themes that will help provide a map as we continue to develop our educational goals and strategies. Importantly, they are "user friendly" and are meant to be goals that our children can understand and internalize. Finally, we provided input into the self-study that is required as part of our ongoing WASC accreditation. This is an important process that increases our school's reputation and opportunities, and pushes us to improve.

The last SAC meeting was Tuesday, February 10. We focused on four major topics.

1. We briefly reviewed the WASC self-study, especially the Action Plan (Ch. 5) and Areas of Growth Needs (end of Ch. 4). This is an impressive document that is posted on UDA's website (<http://urbansd.com/domain/12>). If you are interested in UDA's future, I highly recommend that you look over this document. Importantly, this document incorporated parent feedback from parent surveys, workshops with parent representatives, and parent representatives on SAC. We appear well prepared for the WASC site visit on March 8. If you have input about the Action Plan portion of this self-study, please email me ([jlong@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:jlong@mail.sdsu.edu)).
2. We discussed the Areas of Growth and plans for the middle school, including enrichment programs (electives), rigor, and preparation for IB high schools. This is an ongoing dialogue and parents (through surveys, conversations, and SAC meetings) clearly see the middle school as an area of growth. There has been positive feedback about the recent Middle School information night. One challenge we face moving forward is identifying what is meant by "rigor." If we can't define this further, it will be difficult to assess. We spent 5-10 minutes discussing parent concerns about whether UDA students are prepared for IB High Schools like SD High School of International Studies. Recently, a team of UDA parents and teachers visited our local IB programs and felt confident that our students are prepared for these programs.
3. One specific Area of Growth is Project Based Learning. For many parents, this educational strategy attracted us to UDA and continues to attract families to our school. This is emphasized in our charter and on the UDA website. According to our website, PBL is the "use of classroom projects, intended to bring about deep learning" and is an "approach to build upon authentic learning activities that engage student interest and motivation." This strategy replaces many traditional

approaches by inspiring students to become lifelong learners. This month, the faculty began a series of ongoing professional development sessions to identify ways in which we can enhance PBL at UDA. This spring and summer, the staff will focus on redefining and refining project-based learning at UDA, with a particular focus on linking project-based strategies to the Common Core standards and the Next Generation Science Standards. UDA has seen some amazing examples of PBL this year. We hope to see additional focus on this strategy throughout our campus.

4. We continue to discuss ways to improve dialogue between parents and the school. The parent surveys were critical to the WASC self-study and continue to be a source of discussion in our group. It will be important to monitor how survey results change over time (hopefully seeing signs of improvement in focal areas of growth needs). Parents contributed to workshops for the WASC self study that identified the 7 Areas of Growth Needs. The SAC hopes to be a voice for the entire UDA parent population. The SAC will begin posting agendas and minutes on UDA's website. Starting with this letter, the SAC parent chair will provide updates about our meetings. We would like to introduce parent forums about educational goals and strategies. The idea here is for the SAC and the school to receive useful input for making our school even better.

In future SAC meetings this spring, we will focus on our Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) that we are required to produce. We will continue discussions on the above items, as well as items that we regularly discuss (e.g. recognizing our diversity and using this to improve our community).

Finally, I would like to end with a personal statement about my optimism about UDA. Many of the traits of this school that first attracted me still remain. Our class sizes have grown but we are still below most local public schools. Our Parent Network works efficiently and has demonstrated great successes through fundraising. Our emphases on the arts and P.E. are creating better-balanced students. I enjoy seeing families at pickups and I frequently hang out with these families outside of UDA. I have great confidence in our director, Dr. Taylor. Serving on the SAC has shown me that she is a strong leader who can focus and inspire teams. I don't doubt that she is committed to our school. Finally, I cannot say enough about our excellent teachers. They provide the framework that makes UDA awesome. They deserve tons of credit and they continue to create an amazing environment for discovery. Yes. I recognize that we need to grow in some areas. I expect the school (including parents) to achieve this growth. But I am optimistic that this will happen because I see signs of this already.

Thank you,  
Jeremy Long (SAC Chair)

Victoria González-Rivera (SAC Co-Chair)  
Jeffrey Birchak (SAC Parent Representative)  
Stan Jeffress (SAC Parent Representative)  
Molly Gilbert (SAC Teacher Representative)  
Colleen Marble (SAC Teacher Representative)  
Jenni Taylor (UDA Director)