WELCOME PRINCIPAL MATTHEW STEITZ

After a nationwide search, Matthew Steitz, EdD, has been appointed principal of The Preuss School UC San Diego, effective July 1, 2020. Most recently, Steitz served as assistant superintendent of Educational Excellence for the Vista Unified School District. In his new role, he will work closely with Helen W. Griffith, EdD, executive director of The Preuss School, to build the capacity of scholars, faculty, staff, parents, and community partners. For Steitz, the role of an educational leader is to create a culture where every person is valued and their individual strengths are recognized and developed. Mutual respect, trust, professionalism, and continuous school improvement guide his daily work and keep him focused on exemplary scholar outcomes. "I am thrilled to join The Preuss School team, ready to support the school's history of transformational success, especially at a time when our educational system is challenged by a worldwide pandemic," said Steitz.

CLASS OF 2020 CELEBRATIONS GO VIRTUAL

Seniors at The Preuss School experienced an unpredictable conclusion to their last semester, but they met the challenging circumstances with pride and resilience. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, classes transitioned to remote learning and commencement celebrations pivoted to virtual festivities. Faculty, staff and leadership put their heart into making the untraditional celebrations as memorable as possible.

On May 22, a special carrousel was held to announce the 2020 valedictorian and salutatorian graduation honors. Each honoree—which included valedictorian Mayering Colera and salutatorian Jackie Lee, Jason Nguyen, Kevin Nguyen and Gaudenz Vo—received a banner to showcase in their front yard as well as a medal from their advisory teacher. Then, a parade of faculty and staff drove by in their decorated vehicles, honking and waving banners to offer their congratulations.

A few weeks later, a virtual commencement was held on June 18 to honor the accomplishments of 100 graduating seniors. The ceremony included a keynote address from Mary Daly, PhD, president and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, as well as recognition of the graduates, conferral of diplomas and a traditional tassel turn.

The Preuss School Class of 2020 shines academically with an average GPA of 4.09 and a total of $1.3 million awarded in college grants and scholarships—including a Gates Millennium Scholarship and Quasbridge Scholarship, both covering all college expenses. This year scholars were accepted to over 70 universities across the nation, including UC San Diego, Yale University, Trinity College, UCLA and Cornell University.

A special carrousel was held to announce the valedictorian and salutatorian graduation honors.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S OFFICE

It is my belief that those who experience great challenges will in turn experience great triumph. The Preuss School Class of 2020 is a remarkable group that will achieve great heights because of their ability to persevere and rise above this tumultuous time to their final high school semester.

Despite the challenges, each of our graduating seniors is aligned on a pathway to success in college and careers. They are on their way to UC San Diego, Yale University, UCLA, Cornell University and other prestigious institutions.

Many of their dreams involve helping others or improving equity. Some examples include starting a nonprofit organization to help first-generation students succeed, becoming a pediatric surgeon to reduce health disparities and creating new technologies for autoimmune diseases as a bioengineer. I have no doubt that each will transform their communities.

Commencement this year brought a full spectrum of emotions—joyous excitement for our 106 graduating seniors who achieved seven years of growth and hard work, as well as immense disappointment that the COVID-19 pandemic had stolen in-person celebrations of this momentous occasion. I am incredibly proud of all our scholars, staff and faculty members at The Preuss School who have persevered with strength and compassion.

On March 16, with heavy hearts, we transitioned to remote instruction in accordance with county and state directives to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. Our faculty quickly mobilized to ensure that there was no gap in learning. The remote structure incorporates one-on-one time between faculty and scholars over Zoom, live instruction sessions, small group study, self-paced work and tutoring.

To continue to ensure the safety of our students, summer school will also be delivered remotely. This will include a virtual orientation session for all scholars who will be attending so that they can meet their teachers, understand expectations and ask questions.

Our plan is to return to campus on August 10, offering a blended approach to learning that will include a mix of in-person instruction and remote learning. We are currently determining what this will look like, as we are guided by the recommendations from the medical professionals at UC San Diego Health and the UC San Diego Return to Learn Program.

Throughout these uncertain times, our message to scholars has been one of unity. Together, we will get to the other side of this and see a brighter day. The Preuss School family is tight knit, bolstering scholar success even during the most trying of circumstances.

I hope you and your family have remained safe and well during this time.

Yours in service,

DR. HELEN V. GRIFFITH
Executive Director
The Preuss School UC San Diego

ALUMNI UPDATES

MARLENE LLEVA ’07
As a first-generation college student raised by immigrant parents in San Diego, Marlene Lleva has always wanted to address the social and economic barriers faced by marginalized communities. She earned a bachelor’s degree in international studies from UCLA and a master’s degree in international education from Columbia University Teachers College. Lleva has since devoted her career to advocating for clients as a legal services nonprofit, protecting the rights of youth experiencing homelessness in New York City, particularly LGBTQA+ youth.

THUY WONG ’08
Thuy Wong’s experience at Preuss taught her initiative and helped her feel more comfortable and prepared for a university environment.

She graduated from Pomona College with a degree in environmental studies and chemistry and received a master’s in public health, specializing in public health and promotion, from UC Berkeley. Utilizing her skills in public health education, Wong found herself drawn to working with charter schools. She currently works as president and CEO of CharterSAFE, where she helps schools manage their risks so they can focus school resources on empowering students through education.

STANDOUT SENIORS

Soccer Superstar

In March, senior Elgabe Indukunda was voted one of the top 12 boys’ soccer players in San Diego out of 2,000 players as part of the All CIF First—Team—the first time a member of boys’ soccer from The Preuss School has been awarded this honor. A dynamic playmaker, he helped his team win three straight league championships while making the Principals Honor Roll. In the fall, Indukunda will become the second scholar-athlete in Preuss history to be selected to play in the NCAA Division I as part of the San Diego State University Men’s Soccer team. “He was one of the first players I went to see when I arrived in San Diego,” said SDSU Coach Ryan Hopkins in a press release. “On the field, he is an exciting attacking player that combines blistering pace with an ability to score goals.”