



San Diego Dialogue

Chronology

Since its inception in 1991, San Diego Dialogue has provided a forum for leaders in the San Diego Baja California 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. It has addressed the policy challenges affecting the region, seeking solutions to problematic issues and undertaking initiatives to ensure that exciting new opportunities may reach their potential within Dialogue's mission to raise the standard of living and enhance the quality of life for those who live and work on both sides of the border. Following are key dates and milestones in the organization's history.

- 1991 San Diego Dialogue was founded in 1991 by UCSD's Chancellor, Richard Atkinson, and Associate Vice Chancellor of Public Programs and University Extension Dean, Dr. 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. Its charter: to provide an innovative forum for leaders of the San Diego/Tijuana region to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the region, and develop key research programs and policy initiatives for mutual benefit.
- 1994 Dialogue issued the landmark report on "Who Crosses the Border?" The study examined border crossings at both Otay Mesa and San Ysidro, and found that the majority of all crossings were by frequent legal crossers. As a result of the study, a dedicated commuter lane at the Otay Mesa border was soon established, followed by the development of a pilot program for the Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) system, an automated inspection system for frequent border crossers at Otay Mesa.
- 1996 As part of its environmental commitment to citizens of the region, San Diego Dialogue assembled regional stakeholders to explore opportunities and build consensus for acquiring sensitive wildlife habitats under the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). The program's success helped garner federal, state, local and private financing.
- 1997 The first Forum *Fronterizo* was convened by San Diego Dialogue, bringing together hundreds of thought leaders from throughout the greater San Diego/Baja California region to discuss and build consensus on crossborder policy issues. The program was well received and Forum *Fronterizo* evolved into a regularly held luncheon series featuring noteworthy speakers such as U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, U.S. Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson, and Mexico's Secretary of the Environment Julia Carabias.

1999 The success of Forum Fronterizo encouraged Dialogue to launch The Learning Curve: a Series on Education Reform. The series brought together educators, teachers, parents and community leaders from all over the region to address the disparity in academic achievement between children from affluent neighborhoods and those from poorer neighborhoods and seek solutions to a very complex problem.

Dialogue also worked in tandem with leadership from San Diego State University to help break a deadlock in the city's public school reform, enabling more than 100 highly regarded teachers to become "peer coaches" in the public school system. This accomplishment received additional praise for nipping in the bud a threatened teacher's strike scheduled for the following school year.

2000 In helping support the region's sustainable growth efforts, San Diego Dialogue teamed with the Public Policy Institute of California to conduct a non-partisan poll concerning issues related to the region's growth and quality of life. The poll spawned related research initiatives that, in turn, led to significant investment in programs centered on building livable communities.

The first Celebration of Excellence Awards was produced by San Diego Dialogue to recognize key individuals whose admirable leadership, hard work and commitment helped find solutions to cross-border regional challenges, such as those related to education, housing, and transportation, and other issues that affected the region's quality of life.

2000 The success of the SENTRI program at Otay Mesa led to its adoption in El Paso, Detroit and Buffalo. In 2000, the program was formally implemented at the San Ysidro border crossing, the busiest border in North America, bringing to 60,000 the number of frequent cross-border commuters between San Diego and Tijuana using the system.

2001 San Diego Dialogue issued "Not Without Talented Teachers," a research paper that documented the corollary between qualified and experienced teachers and positive student achievement in San Diego Country schools. It demonstrated the need to offer additional enticements (salary raises, etc.) to draw qualified teachers into low-income, poorer-achieving school districts.

2004 In partnership with CENTRIS, a Tijuana-based economic development organization, and CICESE, a leading science and engineering graduate school in Ensenada, the Dialogue launched its *Crossborder Innovation and Competitiveness Initiative* to address the region's global economic vitality, particularly with regard to new opportunities in the realm of science and technology. Through a binational effort, the initiative sought to identify the region's complementary capabilities in science and technology-based industries, thus improving the region's economy and raising the standard of living for citizens residing on both sides of the border.

- 2005 San Diego Dialogue and its Mexican colleagues initiated a series of roundtables to gather informed opinions about the opportunities and challenges facing the crossborder region, as well as insight into data resources and case studies that might be valuable to current and future reports. Hundreds of leading thinkers and practitioners on both side of the border participated in the roundtables, contributing to what would soon become the first major report issued in support of the *Crossborder Innovation and Competitiveness Initiative*.
- 2006 San Diego Dialogue issues *Borderless Innovation*, its findings from the past year of study, providing both background on the attributes of the crossborder region and ten recommendations for collaborative efforts to create a new “innovation corridor of the Californias.” The report notes that the San Diego-Baja California region has the potential to better compete in the global economy, spurring local growth and prosperity, if a broad coalition of interests can overcome previously fragmented efforts and take the specific steps necessary to collaborate. The report analyzed parallel growth trends on both sides of the border and identified significant competitive clusters that can be developed and marketed globally. Released in both English and Spanish, the report identifies a number of untapped capabilities and opportunities, including biomedical devices, marine biotechnology, aerospace and defense, and software. It describes the complementary institutions, organizations, technology clusters and other elements that, when properly coordinated and leveraged, can be the impetus for even greater economic growth.
- 2007 Following the recommendation from *Borderless Innovation* to foster research and education partnerships that enhance the competitiveness of high technology industries in San Diego and Mexico, San Diego Dialogue launches the *Life Sciences Gateway Initiative* in partnership with the pharmaceutical company Merck and its subsidiary, Merck, Sharp & Dohme México. The Initiative is a multi-year effort 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.

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