Agenda

Competitiveness Conversations Across America: San Diego

Building the Next Economy's Strategic Innovation Stack — Compute, AI, Energy, Bio, Autonomy, and Security

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

University of California San Diego
Price Center - Ballroom East
9500 Gilman Dr., La Jolla, CA 92093

All Times Pacific

- 8:00 AM Registration and Networking Breakfast
- 8:40 AM Competitiveness Conversation Programming
- 12:00 PM Lunch
- 1:00 PM Competitiveness Conversation Programming
- 5:00 PM Adjourn

San Diego:
Building the Next Economy's Strategic Innovation Stack — Compute, AI, Energy, Bio, Autonomy, and Security

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8:00 AM REGISTRATION AND CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

8:40 AM MAPPING SAN DIEGO TO AMERICA'S INNOVATION ECONOMY

In an opening fireside chat, the Conversation's co-hosts will frame the San Diego edition of the "Competitiveness Conversations Across America," highlighting the region's distinctive innovation assets in an ecosystem of emerging and converging technologies – and engage leaders from across the country leading innovation-enhancing efforts and initiatives.

- Dr. Jeffrey P. Gold, President, University of Nebraska System
- Dr. Pradeep K. Khosla, Chancellor, UC San Diego
- **Moderator:** The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness

9:20 AM DECODING SAN DIEGO'S INNOVATION DNA

With deep roots in America's defense history and enterprise — from which have emerged world-class scientific breakthroughs and industries spanning wireless communications to the life sciences and biotech, computation, space, energy, and more — San Diego's ecosystem stands apart in the nation's innovation constellation.

Leading research institutions, entrepreneurial talent, venture and angel capital, a proactive public sector, and strong ties to federal research and national security are several of the pistons powering the San Diego innovation engine. This

session will explore these elemental factors to San Diego's success — and put into context the city's and region's distinctiveness in a national and global context of place-making innovation.

Key Discussion Topics:

1. San Diego is home to a concentration of research institutions with a history of translating science into world-leading companies. What are the defining characteristics of San Diego's innovation ecosystem? How have its institutions, networks, and partnerships created a competitive advantage?

2. What are the pressure points in San Diego's innovation ecosystem today? How is the region adapting?

3. As AI, advanced computing, biotechnology, quantum technologies, and next-generation communications reshape the global economy, where is San Diego best positioned to lead? What investments are required to sustain its competitive advantage?

Panel:

- Mr. Mark Cafferty, President and CEO, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation
- Mr. Chad Evans, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Council on Competitiveness
- Dr. Paul Roben, Associate Vice Chancellor, Innovation and Technology Commercialization, UC San Diego
- Mr. James Zanewicz, CEO, Connect
- **Moderator**: Dr. Albert "Al" P. Pisano, Professor and Dean, Jacobs School of Engineering, Walter J. Zable Endowed Chair of Engineering, and Special Advisor to the Chancellor, UC San Diego

10:00 AM TRANSFORMATIVE COMPUTING: CODING AMERICA'S NEXT ECONOMY

This leadership panel will examine computing's role in (re)shaping entire new applications, businesses, industries, and jobs — from AI to quantum, and beyond exascale high performance computing. Panelists will also showcase California's and San Diego's roles in driving computational research and its ensuing breakthroughs across an array of sciences and sectors.

Key Discussion Topics:

1. How are advances in AI, data science, and computational methods reshaping discovery cycles across fields from biotechnology to advanced materials to energy?

2. How are AI, exascale computing, and emerging quantum capabilities converging into a new computational infrastructure? What does this convergence enable?

3. Where is San Diego's and the state's transformative computing ecosystem strongest today, where are its gaps, and what would most meaningfully accelerate leadership over the next decade?

Panel:

- Dr. Ludmil Alexandrov, Professor, Department of Bioengineering, Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine, UC San Diego
- The Hon. Patricia Falcone, Deputy Director for Science and Technology, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- Dr. Rajesh Gupta, Dean, Halıcıoğlu School of Data Science and Computing, Founding Director, HDSI, Distinguished Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, Data Science, UC San Diego
- **Moderator:** Dr. Ramesh Rao, Director, Qualcomm Institute; Interim Director, Calit2; Professor, Electrical and Computing Engineering, Jacobs School of Engineering, UC San Diego

10:40 AM COMPETITIVENESS CHAT: FRAMING THE FUTURE OF AI

Transformative computing — especially AI — is advancing at breakneck speed. In face of this pace of change, leaders grapple with its implications for economic and productivity growth, innovation capacity and capability, governance, and public trust. This conversation will explore responsible scaling of AI innovation, as well as policies and investments – local to San Diego and more broadly – to sustain U.S. leadership in an emergent field.

Key Discussion Topics:

1. How should leaders across San Diego and the nation balance rapid AI innovation with the need for trust, safety, accountability, and public confidence? What are the tradeoffs between speed to deployment and responsible governance? What risks emerge if we overcorrect in either direction?

2. Whether foundational models, computing physical infrastructure, data, talent, regulation, commercialization, or other factors, where are the biggest bottlenecks to U.S. leadership in AI emerging? What are the advantages San Diego's innovation ecosystem can provide to this emergent field?

3. As AI becomes a foundational technology akin to electricity or the internet, what investments and institutions must the United States build today to ensure long-term market leadership as well as broad-based prosperity?

Panel:

- Ms. Maria Anguiano, Chair, UC Board of Regents
- Dr. Pradeep K. Khosla, Chancellor, UC San Diego
- Dr. Liz Lyons, Associate Professor, School of Global Policy and Strategy, (GPS), UC San Diego
- Mr. Gunjan Sinha, Founder and Chairman, OpenGrowth Ventures
- Dr. Lily Weng, Assistant Professor, HDSI, UC San Diego
- **Moderator:** Dr. Frank Wuerthwein, Director, San Diego Supercomputer Center, UC San Diego

11:20 AM ENERGY IS EVERYTHING: POWERING THE NEXT ECONOMY — ADVANCED NUCLEAR, FUSION, STORAGE, AND MORE

Energy generation, storage, and delivery are shaping the next U.S. economy – as well as its productivity potential and national security. San Diego is a global leader in fusion, energy storage, next-generation power systems, and more. This session will explore the breakthroughs and capabilities emerging from the region that will power the future economy.

Key Discussion Topics:

1. The United States possesses abundant energy resources and world-leading energy innovation capabilities. As energy demand grows from AI and the electrification of the economy, how can the nation leverage its strengths to reinforce its competitive advantage? Where are the greatest opportunities to expand and diversify the U.S. energy portfolio?

2. San Diego and California have emerged as global leaders in fusion, plasma science, grid-scale storage, advanced materials, and next-generation power systems. What assets have enabled this leadership, and where will the region make the greatest contributions in the future?

3. As next-generation energy technologies move from research to commercial deployment, what is needed — investment, regulation, demand signals, talent, etc. — to accelerate adoption and maximizing economic and societal impact?

Panel:

- Dr. Kimberly Budil, Laboratory Director, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- Dr. Javier Garay, Professor, MAE, and Founding Director, Fusion Engineering Institute, UC San Diego
- Dr. Anantha Krishnan, Senior Vice President, Energy Group, General Atomics
- Mr. Pasquale Romano, CEO, Tempo
- Mr. Miguel Romero, Senior Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer, San Diego Gas & Electric Company

- **Moderator:** Dr. Albert “Al” P. Pisano, Professor and Dean, Jacobs School of Engineering, Walter J. Zable Endowed Chair of Engineering, and Special Advisor to the Chancellor, UC San Diego

12:00 PM LUNCH

1:00 PM BEYOND THE BASICS: EXPLORING THE HORIZONS OF BIO

The bioeconomy is projected to become a $30 trillion global opportunity by mid-century, creating a new frontier of innovation-led economic growth and prosperity. Regions that translate scientific breakthroughs into commercial success will capture the greatest value. This session will explore how San Diego is leveraging advances in gene editing, synthetic biology, precision medicine, computation, and more to lead in the bioeconomy of the future.

Key Discussion Topics:

1. What are the most exciting advances in gene editing, RNA science, synthetic biology, and precision diagnostics, and what's needed to translate these discoveries into a scalable product, platform, or therapy?

2. As biotechnology advances faster than regulatory frameworks in many cases, how can leaders balance speed, safety, and public trust while maintaining U.S. competitiveness in the global bioeconomy?

3. San Diego has emerged as one of the world's leading biotechnology hubs. What capabilities, partnerships, or investments will be most important for the region to strengthen if it hopes to lead the next wave of breakthroughs in precision medicine, diagnostics, and engineered biology?

Panel:

- Dr. Alex Khalessi, Chief Innovation Officer, UC San Diego Health
- Ms. Phyllis Marquitz, Senior Vice President, Global Regulatory, Sustainability and Public Affairs, IFF
- Dr. Jason Paragas, CEO and Founder, DVLP Medicines
- Ms. Susan Tousi, CEO, DELFI Diagnostics

- Dr. Gene Yeo, Professor of Cellular and Molecular Medicine, Founding Member of the Institute for Genomic Medicine, and Founding Director of the Center for RNA, UC San Diego
- **Moderator:** Dr. Kit Pogliano, Dean, School of Biological Sciences, UC San Diego

1:40 PM THE FUTURE OF HEALTH TECH & COMPETITIVENESS – SENSORS

In the portfolio of future healthcare advances, real-world implementation is underway. Some leaders are building better sensors and patches to produce high-resolution data — but fewer are building the clinically validated and workflow-integrated systems that promise to reduce healthcare costs and drive local, regional, and national competitiveness. This panel will explore the barriers to implementation — and the opportunities for fast-movers in this space.

Key Discussion Topics:

1. As sensors become smaller, smarter, and more ubiquitous, how might they fundamentally change the way healthcare is delivered — from episodic care to continuous monitoring and intervention — and what could that mean for costs, outcomes, and competitiveness?

2. From a venture, commercialization, and regulatory perspective, what determines which health technologies successfully move from breakthrough innovation to scaled, clinically deployed products — and what separates the companies that achieve market adoption from those that stall?

3. Even when sensor technologies are technically ready, many struggle to be adopted in real-world healthcare settings. What are the key challenges in integrating these tools into clinical workflows and patient care systems?

Panel:

- Dr. Kiana Aran, Professor of Bioengineering and Bioelectronics, Jacobs School of Engineering, UC San Diego
- Dr. Dinesh Bharadia, Associate Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Klein Gilhousen Chancellor's Endowed Chair, UC San Diego

- Dr. Karandeep Singh, Chief Health AI Officer, UC San Diego Health; Joan and Irwin Jacobs Endowed Chair in Digital Health Innovation, UC San Diego
- Dr. Garrett Smith, Managing Partner, ReefHaven Ventures
- **Moderator:** Dr. Alan Moazzam, Hospitalist – Health Sciences Associate Clinical Professor, UC San Diego Health

2:20 PM INNOVATION BLITZ

A set of lightning presentations, highlighting emerging innovation capabilities on campus, in San Diego, and around the region.

Session Introductory Remarks and Emcee: Dr. Corinne Peek-Asa, Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, UC San Diego

2:30 PM The Cutting Edge of Advanced Microelectronics and Semiconductors

- Dr. Bill Lin, Professor and Associate Dean for Research, Jacobs School of Engineering, UC San Diego

2:45 PM SPACE – Stem Cells Pathways, Aging and Cancer Evolution

- Dr. Catriona Jamieson, Director, Sanford Stem Cell Institute; Director, CIRM UC San Diego, Alpha Clinic; Professor, Medicine and Chief, Division of Regenerative Medicine; Sanford Stem Cell Institute Chancellors Endowed Chair in Regenerative Medicine, UC San Diego

3:00 PM Microbial Solutions for Soil Health and Food Security

- Dr. Sarah M. Allard, Project Scientist, Gilbert Lab; and Executive Director, Soil Health Center, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego

3:15 PM The Future of Human Performance

- Dr. Sam Ward, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, UC San Diego

3:30 PM **A NEW FRONTIER:**
SCOPING THE PARAMETERS OF AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS – FROM RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TO APPLICATIONS IN DEFENSE, SECURITY, AND SPACE

San Diego is a national hub for innovation at the intersection of space technologies, defense capabilities, and national security solutions. This session will explore how agile approaches to satellite systems, advanced communications, human systems and biology, and defense R&D are shaping the future of technology deployment and strategic readiness.

Key Discussion Topics:

1. With satellites and space-based systems becoming critical infrastructure for communications, defense, and intelligence, what does the modern space race look like?

2. San Diego's defense and space ecosystem is increasingly focused on accelerating the transition from R&D to operational capability. What new models of acquisition, prototyping, and systems integration are enabling faster deployment of advanced communications, satellite systems, and autonomous technologies?

3. San Diego sits at the intersection of defense, space, and commercial innovation. How are defense primes, national security organizations, and emerging tech firms working together to accelerate dual-use technologies (e.g., AI, autonomous systems, human performance, and advanced sensing)?

Panel:

- Dr. Tahllee Baynard, Vice President, System Prototypes, Lockheed Martin
- Mr. Steve Hart, Co-founder, Viasat
- Dr. Peggy Whitson, Senior Vice President, Human Spaceflight Training, Axiom Space
- **Moderator:** Mr. Scott Tait, COO and Director of Government Programs, Lumetec, and former Executive Director, San Diego National Security Innovation Catalyst

4:10 PM THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS: SAN DIEGO'S INNOVATION PAST, PRESENT, POTENTIAL – AND LESSONS FOR THE NATION

San Diego's rise as a global innovation hub reflects decades of investment in research, talent, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, and cross-sector collaboration. Drawing on the themes explored throughout the day, from AI and advanced computing to energy, biotechnology, and national security, this closing conversation will examine what makes innovation ecosystems around the nation thrive; what lessons San Diego, greater California, and other regions offer the nation at large; and what actions are needed to strengthen America's competitive position in the decades ahead.

Key Discussion Topics:

1. The day's discussions highlighted how AI, biotechnology, energy, advanced computing, and national security are increasingly converging. What are the most important lessons emerging from this convergence, and what do they suggest about where to focus U.S. priorities going forward?

2. What ingredients — talent, capital, institutional alignment, partnerships, policy, standards, etc. — will be most important for San Diego to build on its strengths, further accelerate its innovation ecosystem, and sustain long-term global leadership?

3. As technologies, markets, and national priorities evolve, what new policies, forms of collaboration, investments, infrastructure, etc., are required to translate breakthrough discoveries into greater productivity, security, and prosperity?

Panel:

- Dr. S. Jack Hu, Chancellor, UC Riverside
- The Hon. Laurie Locascio, CEO, ANSI, and former Under Secretary of Commerce and Director, NIST, U.S. Department of Commerce
- Dr. Prabhas Moghe, President, The University of Texas at Dallas
- The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness
- **Moderator:** Dr. Pradeep K. Khosla, Chancellor, UC San Diego

4:50 PM REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- Dr. Pradeep K. Khosla, Chancellor, UC San Diego
- The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness

5:00 PM ADJOURN