

March 13, 2026

FEATURED NEWS



Alumna Jessica Meir Returns to Space: This Time as Commander

NASA astronaut and graduate of Scripps Oceanography launches to International Space Station for eight-month mission.

Learn more



Six UC San Diego Faculty Elected to National Academy of Inventors for 2026

Six UC San Diego researchers have been named Senior Members by the National Academy of Inventors (NAI) in 2026. Meet Omar Akbari, Brian P. Head, Abdoulaye Ndao, Yunde Zhao, Edward Wang and Kenneth Vecchio.

Learn more



If You're Building a Startup, Daniel Chang Wants You to Hear This First

Enjoy this Q&A with UC San Diego Rady School of Management Professor of Practice Daniel Chang who will mentor students, provide guest lectures, support

campus innovation programs and give ongoing founder coaching.

Learn more



Find Out What's Happening in National Security Innovation

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LEARN ABOUT THE FORGE



WEST 2026: Ensuring Maritime Leadership and The Road Ahead

The San Diego Convention Center was electric last month for the annual **WEST 2026**, where the message from the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard leadership was clear: we are shifting from "experimentation" to "operational advantage." As the premier naval conference on the West Coast, this year's theme—**"Sustaining Maritime**

Dominance”—provided a sharp look at the dual-use technologies and talent pipelines we are cultivating right here at **UC San Diego**.

Innovation & Research Alignment

The priorities voiced by leadership align directly with the strategic pillars we are building at UC San Diego:

- **Accelerated AI Integration:** With over 38 panels dedicated to AI, the Department of the Navy is focused on moving AI from lab pilots to the fleet. This mirrors our work at **The FORGE**, where we accelerate the future of security through dual-use innovations.

- **Autonomy & Robotics:** From seabed to space, the demand for resilient, autonomous platforms is at an all-time high. Our collaboration with **Naval Innovation, Science and Engineering Center (NISEC)** is perfectly positioned to address the Navy’s call for "Sailor self-sufficiency" through the development of basic research and acceleration of its transition into the innovation pipeline.

- **Next-Gen Talent:** Leadership repeatedly stated that "people are our greatest advantage." Through the **Innovating for National Security (i4NS)**, we continue to develop mission-ready talent who understand the intersection of technology and national security, ensuring our students are prepared to support operational personnel from day one.

Final Thought

Secretary of the Navy John Phelan noted that "cutting red tape" is a strategic necessity. By fostering deep partnerships between academia and the military, we are helping to create the systemic change required to keep the competitive edge in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

Innovating at the Tactical Edge: DICE Alliance and What's Next

Following a high-impact month that featured the **WEST 2026** conference, the February **DICE (Defense Innovation and Collaboration Ecosystem) Alliance** update highlights how The FORGE’s outreach effort is cementing San Diego’s status as the nation's premier defense tech and innovation hub. The goal remains clear: leveraging our unique proximity to 150,000 Sea Service personnel and 12,000 industry partners to turn leverage UC San Diego’s strength in Autonomy, Robotics, AI & Data and Human Performance into an operational reality.

Inside the Ecosystem: DICE Alliance Updates

While leadership at WEST 2026 focused on high-level strategy, the DICE Alliance is driving the ground-level execution required to sustain maritime dominance:

- **Small Business Impact:** A new **EDC Small Business Study** is underway to better understand and support the local engines of innovation that fuel our defense economy.

- **Quarterly DICEx:** We are continuing our momentum through **Quarterly DICEx** events, providing a consistent platform for the convergence of builders and users.

Company in the Spotlight: Skapa by Saab

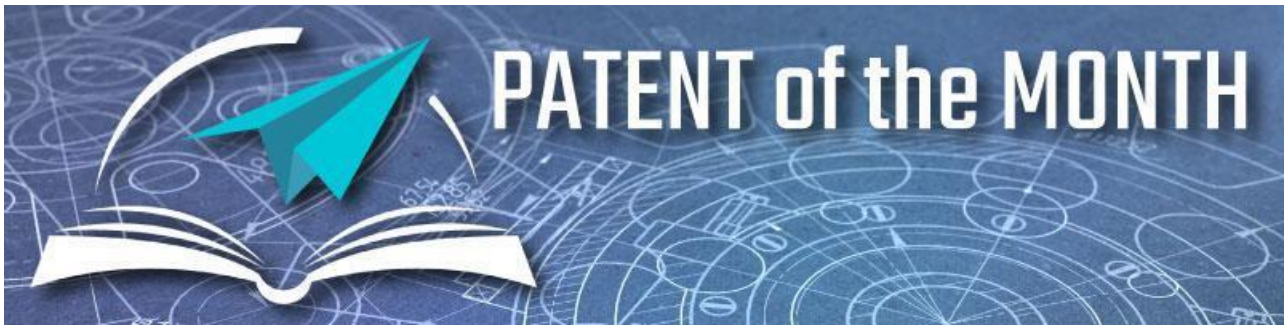


This month, we met with **Skapa by Saab**. As a leader in the defense space and our recent venue sponsor, Saab continues to demonstrate the power of dual-use technologies in maritime environments. Their presence in the San Diego ecosystem underscores the international collaboration vital to our "Blue Green Integration" and the broader mission of the Five Eyes Alliance. Saab also works closely with UC San Diego's Contextual Robotics Institute.

Looking Forward

The "Secret Sauce" of our region is — and always has been — proximity. By bringing together the researchers at UC San Diego, the tactical experts in the fleet, and the builders in industry, we are ensuring that the innovations discussed at WEST don't just stay on the convention floor but reach the hands of those out in the field.







U.S. Patent: 12,543,952 "Imaging system and method for fluorescence guided surgery"

Application Granted: February 10, 2026

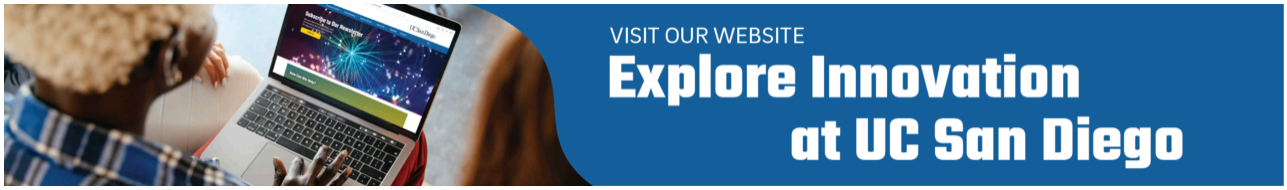
Inventors: Roger Y. Tsien, Quyen T. Nguyen, Paul A. Steinbach

This present disclosure and invention address the problem of simultaneously viewing of 1) the surgical field with white light reflectance (what all surgeons are trained to do) in conjunction with 2) fluorescently labeled targets. The present disclosure provides methods for achieving optical contrast between the fluorescently labeled target and the remainder of surgical field

seen with white light reflectance by overlaying a fluorescent image of the surgical field with a live color image of the same field. The fluorescent portion of the image is pseudocolored with a hue that is not normally present in mammalian tissue; allowing the surgeon to easily distinguish between normal tissue and targeted tissue. This invention is designed to work with any fluorophore, at any excitation or emission wavelength. The invention can handle multiple individual fluorophores as well as fluorescence resonance energy transfer (FRET) fluorophore pairs, simultaneously with white light reflectance. In addition, the invention can be adapted to systems with binocular vision for improved depth of field during surgery.

Sponsors:
This invention was made with government support under CA158448, EB008122, and EB014929 awarded by the National Institutes of Health, and under W81XWH-05-1-0183 and W81XWH-09-1-0699 awarded by the Defense Health Agency, Medical Research and Development Branch.

Licensee:
OnLume Inc. is a developer of an imaging technology designed to advance surgical precision, optimize patient outcomes, and reduce morbidity and costs. The company's technology provides convenient image quality with low fluorescent agent concentrations for post-surgical complications, enabling surgeons to get access to improved visualization of critical anatomy in real-time during surgery.



UPCOMING EVENTS



OUP Webinar 3/24

Osage University Partners (OUP) is hosting a timely webinar on where startup funding is headed next on March 24, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. PT. The conversation will feature Bill Harrington and Allen Chen from OUP's investment team, covering market behavior across the startup ecosystem with a specific focus on university innovation.

Register Now!



MoForum 2026 From Innovation to Impact 3/25

Join MoFo on March 25 in San Diego for MoForum 2026 | Life Sciences – From Innovation to Impact, a half-day gathering bringing together leaders from across the life sciences ecosystem. Through engaging panel discussions and real world perspectives, the program will explore how innovation translates into meaningful outcomes for patients, companies and the industry.

Register Now!



Build an MVP in Days, Not Months: BAmF AI Framework Demo 4/16

Turn your ideas into working prototypes faster with the Bot-Assisted mcube™ Framework (BAmF). On Thursday, April 16, there will be a live demo, where you will see how an agentic AI framework can dramatically shorten the path from concept to MVP by helping generate requirements, product designs, and even code. Whether you're a founder, researcher, or simply someone with an idea, this session will show how structured AI workflows can help teams build, test and iterate products far more quickly.

Register now

NEW OPPORTUNITIES



2026 Convene and Influence Funding Program

The application cycle for the Office of Research and Innovation's Convene and Influence program is now open, and applications are due by **Monday, March 16, 2026**. Through this program, the aim is to support convening and dissemination activities that will shape future research agendas at UC San Diego and beyond.

Apply Here



Extended Studies: Essentials of Entrepreneurship, Innovation, & Design

The Essentials of Entrepreneurship, Innovation, & Design course is now open for enrollment with UC San Diego Extended Studies. This in-person class introduces the fundamentals of entrepreneurship and innovation, helping participants learn how to think creatively about problems, generate new ideas, validate solutions through customer discovery, and pitch concepts effectively! The course runs March 31 – June 2, 2026 at the Design & Innovation Building, with a registration deadline of **March 27, 2026**. Limited seats are available.

Learn more



Pitch Pulse – Bio & Health Innovation: From Molecule to Machine

Check out Pitch Pulse 2026, a multi-vertical startup pitch series designed to spotlight promising founders and strengthen the SoCal innovation ecosystem. Across five focused online sessions, early-stage startups will present within dedicated industry verticals, receive ecosystem-driven feedback, and connect with mentors, investors, and partners. The series culminates in a final in person showcase.

Session 1 on April 17, 2026 begins with Bio & Health Innovation: From Molecule to Machine highlighting startups working across biotechnology, health technologies, and human performance solutions.

Register to attend Session 01.

Apply to Pitch



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The Design & Innovation Building at UC San Diego.

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