

Lisa and Jay Hanson '96: Investing in the Future



Investing in the Future: Alumni Couple Makes Historic Gift

The University of California, San Diego's School of International Relations and Pacific Studies has received the largest alumni gift in the School's history thanks to class of 1996 alumni, Lisa and Jay Hanson.

With their recent pledge of \$250,000, the couple has established the Hanson Sterner Fellowship Fund, which will benefit graduate students pursuing a Master of International Affairs (formerly the Master of Pacific International Affairs) at UC San Diego. The fellowship fund, which is endowed, will remain in perpetuity.

"We thank Lisa and Jay Hanson for their visionary gift," said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. "Fellowships are critical for graduate students, who play a key role in UC San Diego's research enterprise. Upon graduation, these outstanding scholars will go on to become the innovators, teachers and leaders of tomorrow."

"We are so grateful to the Hansons for this historic gift to support our outstanding students," said Peter Cowhey, dean of the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies. "This donation is truly a groundbreaking action

representing our alumni's dedication to ensuring the long-term success of both our students and the school as a whole."

The Hansons, who met each other while attending IR/PS as students, credit their education at UC San Diego with giving them the tools to succeed in business both in the United States and abroad. Jay has a long history at eBay, Inc., and currently serves as vice president of European Expansion and Cross Border Trade at the Fortune 500 company. Lisa worked in the finance industry, before focusing on raising the couple's young children. Currently, the Hansons live in Berlin, where Jay leads a large part of eBay's European operations.

The couple's choice to give to the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, and specifically to graduate fellowships, is a personal one. "Both of us benefited from financial support while we were there," said Lisa. "The School had a big impact on our lives, so we would like to help make that opportunity possible for future students."

Jay received the Nick Binkley Fellowship, established by the first chair of the School's International Advisory Board, while Lisa benefited from various scholarships to support her studies. Fellowships play a key role in helping to ensure that graduate students can focus on their studies rather than worrying about working to support themselves through school. They can also be used to attract top students—like current IR/PS student Emily Foecke—who may be offered more competitive fellowship packages from other universities. Fellowship support played a key role in Foecke's decision to attend UC San Diego.

"I would not have come to UC San Diego without my fellowship, as I was leaving a well-paid private sector job and received a 75 percent tuition scholarship to another institution," said Foecke, who received a more competitive fellowship package to attend IR/PS. Prior to attending UC San Diego, Foecke worked with development organizations in Cambodia, Kenya and Sierra Leone, as well as at two Fortune 500 companies.

"My fellowship allows me to focus on my studies and prepare for my career after graduation," she continued. "Alleviating the stress and financial management and planning that crushing student loans can bring has been critical for me to have the time and mental energy to fully invest myself in my coursework and to take leadership roles outside of the classroom."

At IR/PS, Foecke is focusing her studies on the implementation and evaluation of programs designed to address global issues ranging from poverty reduction to quality of life. Eventually, Foecke hopes to build a company that works with small to medium-sized nonprofits to help them invest their resources more responsibly and effectively to achieve the maximum possible impact around the globe.

“Financial assistance options for graduate education are paltry today, which presents a huge disincentive to graduates pursuing careers in social impact and not-for-profit ventures,” said Foecke. “Yet, these are the same ventures where young people from forward-thinking, data-driven intuitions like IR/PS are desperately needed to find solutions to the world’s biggest problems.”

The Hansons, like many alumni, couldn’t agree more. “We believe that the School will play a key role in creating the kinds of leaders that can help the world tackle the issues and opportunities we know are coming as a result of technological advancement, globalization, climate change and more,” said Jay. “We look at our gift as, not only an investment in the School, but also an investment in the future.”