

# Major Gift Supports UC San Diego's 21st Century China Center



**Donation will expand research and policy studies related to China and U.S-China relations**

By Christine Clark | [UC San Diego News](#)

The Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation has donated a major gift to the University of California San Diego's 21st Century China Center. The support will allow the center, which is based at the School of Global Policy and Strategy, to expand its data-based research, policy engagement and education on issues related to U.S.-China relations.

The donation is the largest ever received by the [School of Global Policy and Strategy](#) (GPS) and its research centers. The foundational gift includes a sizable portion for an endowment cementing the [21st Century China Center](#) (21CCC) as the leading U.S. academic center and policy think tank that produces scholarly research and informs policy discussions related to China.

"UC San Diego is honored to accept this foundational gift from Joe and Clara Tsai," said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. "The gift to UC San Diego's 21st

Century China Center will bolster ongoing policy research at a time when the interaction between Asia and the Americas is a primary driver of global economics. The confidence and support of the Tsai family solidifies the center's reputation as the world's leader in evidence-based research and analysis of U.S.-China relations."

Joe Tsai is co-founder and executive vice chairman of the China-based global Internet technology company Alibaba Group. His wife, Clara Wu Tsai, is an investor and philanthropist and a longtime resident of La Jolla whose philanthropic work is focused on scientific research, economic mobility, social justice and creativity in the arts. The couple are owners of the Brooklyn Nets, New York Liberty, and the San Diego Seals of the National Lacrosse League.

Just in the last year, the duo's generosity played a critical life-saving role during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the severe shortage of medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) in the U.S. became apparent in April 2020, the Tsais donated millions of masks, goggles and ventilators to hospitals and nursing homes in New York, then the epicenter of the virus. Concurrently, they donated nearly a [half a million pieces of \(PPE\) to the state of California](#), the majority of which was shipped to UC San Diego to help protect health care workers throughout the region.



*From left: Peter F. Cowhey, dean of the School of Global Policy and Strategy; Lei Guang, 21st Century China Center executive director; Susan Shirk, School of Global Policy and Strategy research professor and chair of the 21st Century China Center; Stephen Hadley, former U.S. National Security Advisor under George W. Bush; and Jerry Brown, former governor of California. This photo was taken at the 2019 UC San Diego Forum on U.S.-China Relations, the first ongoing high-level bipartisan forum in the U.S. focusing entirely on the U.S.-China relationship.*

In August 2020, the Tsais established a \$50 million Social Justice Fund, which aims to address systemic imbalances that lead to racial gaps in education, health and wealth.

The new gift to UC San Diego will provide funding for 21CCC research, policy study and public engagement, as well as student support and an endowed center directorship.

“We are pleased to make this gift to support the 21st Century China Center at UC San Diego,” said Joe Tsai. “Clara and I care deeply about U.S.-China relations and educating people in both countries about the facts behind the relationship. We believe that this center’s innovative research will enhance America’s understanding about China, which will be critical for the welfare of people in both countries.”

21CCC provides a West Coast perspective in U.S. policy discussions and public discourse about China.

“When we established the 21st Century China Center in 2012 at the School of Global Policy and Strategy, we envisioned a policy-relevant research center to study the most important international relationship of our time,” said Peter F. Cowhey, dean of GPS. “This vision has become a reality and the support of the Tsais is testament to our achievements. Their remarkable generosity greatly enhances our ability to advance scholarship and convene policy discussions critical to the immediate relevance for China’s development and U.S.-China relations.”

## **A foundational gift paving the way for a new generation of distinguished China policy experts**

The Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation support will allow the center to expand and deepen research initiatives. Additionally, it provides much-needed fellowships for students at UC San Diego studying China.

“The stakes in future U.S.-China relations are especially high for the young people in the U.S. and China,” said Clara Wu Tsai. “With this in mind, we want to provide fellowship support to help the center and the school train the future leaders and policymakers who will contribute to U.S.-China relations. This is a cause that is very important to us.”

The gift will also advance the center’s capacity to build out platforms such as academic publications, policy briefs, multimedia products and visiting lectures at UC San Diego.



*Susan Shirk speaking with UC San Diego alum Kurt Campbell, who was recently appointed by president Biden as the White House Indo-Pacific policy coordinator. The new position is unprecedented in elevating Asia's importance in U.S. policy. Campbell has served on leadership boards for the 21st Century China Center and the School of Global Policy and Strategy. This photo was taking at the 2019 UC San Diego Forum on U.S.-China Relations.*

Led by GPS research professor and center chair [Susan Shirk](#) as well as executive director Lei Guang, the center serves as a convener of meaningful policy forums. These include online and in-person briefings in San Diego, Washington, D.C. and China. The events engage practitioners and policymakers from the government and the private sector. For example, the center is the host of [the UC San Diego Forum on U.S.-China Relations](#), the first ongoing high-level bipartisan forum in the U.S. focusing entirely on the U.S.-China relationship.

“We are so thankful to the Tsais for recognizing the contributions of our center at a time when relations between the U.S. and China have become increasingly strained,” said Shirk. “We believe it is essential for the two countries to cooperate on global threats, such as climate change and the pandemic, even while we compete. This support helps us carry out our mission to inform the public and improve the effectiveness of U.S. policymaking towards China.”

Current research innovations underway at the center include the [China Data Lab](#), which serves as a hub of data resources, analytical tools, blogposts and training workshops to advance knowledge of China. Under the direction of [Margaret E. \(Molly\) Roberts](#), associate professor in the department of political science, the lab supports multiple projects initiated by 21CCC scholars. Their work sheds new light on the dynamics of change in Chinese politics, society and economy.

More information about 21CCC can be found on the [center's website](#), and more information on GPS can be found on the [school's website](#).