

# New initiatives and opportunities underway



## **Dean Caroline Freund reflects on her first month at GPS and outlines her goals for the trajectory of the school**

By Caroline Freund

My first month as dean of the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) has been incredibly energizing. I am deeply honored and humbled to follow in Peter Cowhey's footsteps, and I hope that we can continue together the strong trajectory of the school.

I have met with many in the GPS community, including members of the advisory board, donors and alumni. The strength of the program and belief in the school by faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends is evident.

You have worked to create a strong program in international affairs and public policy, integrating with the excellent scholars at UC San Diego and producing top notch research. The closeness and intellectual strength of the community shines. I truly appreciate the warm welcome I have received. One clear goal for me is to help ensure that GPS gets the recognition it deserves.



My immediate focus over the next few months will be on getting to know GPS well. I want to know what you like most about the school; how our research can be most impactful; the topics students are most eager to learn; the skills employers are seeking in GPS graduates; how to strengthen interdisciplinary engagement; how we can better promote equity and inclusion; and how I can best support students, faculty and staff.

I am excited that we have a number of new initiatives underway, including the launch of the [21st Century India Center](#) this fall. The new center will continue in building on our strength in Asian studies, as a world-class hub for the study of modern India and U.S.-India relations. I look forward to the important research and policy conversations that will be sparked.

Before joining GPS, I was the director for trade, investment and competitiveness at the World Bank. I served in this role for nearly four years, leading the bank's strategy in these areas, building and disseminating research, steering our country programs and collaborating with other institutions. It was a fantastic experience, and I hope many of my skills will translate in this new role; I also count on your support in helping me learn new ones.

Some of you have asked why I decided to move to academia. As a researcher and a strong believer in the importance of evidence in policymaking, it is something I have always considered, but the timing never seemed right.

After a year of working from home and the introspection that comes with it, I became more open to change. I enjoyed the interviews, and my interest grew as I talked to many of you and learned more about GPS. I always admired the school, believing it to have the right balance of rigorous analytics and policy discussion.

And the defining policy challenges of our time - U.S.-China relations, borders (especially related to global value chains and migration), democracy, technology and climate action - are all areas where the premier faculty and location give GPS strong comparative advantage. Educating our students to be effective leaders, who rely on evidence for policy, while maintaining strong ethics is an exciting opportunity.

I am joining at an unusual time, as the country reopens, and faculty and students return to the classroom after a year of virtual work and school. Working with the broader UC San Diego community, I will aim to support you in making the transition as smooth as possible, especially when many of our students may be in countries still in the midst of the pandemic or where travel is difficult.

Going forward, I hope we can maintain the productivity and flexibility gains of the last year while returning to the excitement and innovation that comes from seeing each other in person. I have been coming into the office for the last month, and the many in-person meetings, walks and coffees have been truly energizing. While the uncertain outlook will remain with us for some time, over the last year we have learned to be resilient and flexible, and I am sure these skills will be indispensable in the coming months.

Finally, I'd also like to welcome the incoming students, our largest class in the school's history, and two new faculty - Benjamin Appel and Jakana Thomas. Tune in this fall as we will profile these new scholars in our upcoming newsletters.

I look forward to getting to know you and to an exciting year for GPS!