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Recent Grads Creating New Alumni Chapter

Two former students are starting the Compact Scholars Alumni Chapter.

Story Highlights

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Current and former Compact Scholar students met last week to discuss the alumni chapter.

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By **Josh Hoffman**

Jennifer Yu Liu, 22, works mostly with underprivileged students in before- and after-school programs at various South San Diego schools.

“A lot of these kids don’t see themselves ... going to college,” she said, tears forming in her eyes.

Yu Liu used to be one of those kids.

Born in Mexico to Chinese parents, she grew up in impoverished, violence-plagued South County. Her mother and father always stressed the importance of education, but Yu Liu didn’t believe she could meet their academic expectations.

“I felt like my parents didn’t believe in me and that they didn’t think I would do well because my grades weren’t high,” she said.

In seventh grade, Yu Liu signed a contract to join **Compact for Success**, a comprehensive partnership created in 1998 between SDSU and the Sweetwater Union High School District that guarantees university admission for any Sweetwater student who meets program requirements.

In 2006, she enrolled at SDSU as part of the **first Compact Scholars Program freshman class** and completed her bachelor’s degree in child development in four years. A year removed from graduation, Yu Liu still wants to be a part of the program.

Alumni chapter comes to life

Together with Jen Abundez, another one of the 42 students who last year comprised the **first Compact Scholars graduating class**, Yu Liu is creating the Compact Scholars Alumni Chapter. Their goal is threefold:

1. Connect prospective students and current Compact Scholars with alumni
2. Help current Compact Scholars (most of whom commute from South County) engage with the campus community
3. Provide workshops to teach incoming and current Compact Scholars about time management, campus resources and study skills, among other tools for academic success

“We as the alumni chapter are there to donate our time and let them know that, since we’ve been through that process, we know how they feel,” Yu Liu said. “If they need any help, they can come to us.”

Alumni chapter members also plan to host various events, including an end-of-summer bonfire and a fall mixer.

“That’s really what I believe these programs are all about — helping these students who have been helped continue to grow in their next chapter of life,” said Heather LaPerle, who will serve as the chapter’s advisor.

“I think the alumni group is just another piece in helping provide those resources,” added LaPerle, who is also the advisor for **Scholars for Success**, the student organization associated with the **Compact Scholars Program**.

Ultimately, Abundez believes the common bond between current and former Compact Scholars will help develop and strengthen the chapter.

“By having this alumni chapter present, and as it grows, we’re going to have people here from different backgrounds and different majors and different career choices,” said Abundez, who was president of Scholars for Success in 2009.

“But there’s one thing that brings us all together — the district we all lived and grew up in.”

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