

José Santana Sosa

*IDEA Center's Spotlight on UC San Diego's
Transfer Engineers*



Quick Facts

Grade: 2nd Year Transfer (undergrad)

Major: Computer Science

Outside Interests: Music, Fashion, Animals, and Traveling/Exploring

Questions about your experiences:

How has your perspective as a transfer student influenced your experience at UCSD?

Being a transfer student has completely influenced my experience at UCSD. I came to this school with a wide array of cultural wealth. For example, even before I started community college, I took



two years off school to move to the U.S. and I entered the workforce at an immigration law office at 17 years old. This and many other experiences gave me humility, confidence, and a unique approach to my education. That is why as soon as I started my journey here, I knew I had to use these values to my benefit. Especially because other factors were working against me (lack of knowledge of the American educational system, lack of professional connections, and even my accent). Knowing my strengths and weaknesses is what has helped me be successful at UCSD. It dictates how I carry myself and has allowed me to obtain and create many interesting opportunities to continue growing and evolving. Every transfer student has a rich history and they contribute so much to the school.

What has your journey been like at SHPE? What are your plans as this year's Transfer Committee Lead?

One of the best decisions I have made at UCSD is getting involved with engineering diversity student organizations. Both SHPE (Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers) and oSTEM (Out in STEM) have opened up so many doors and opportunities for me to network, socialize, and grow as a person and professional. I attended my first SHPE meeting because my friend Janitzia invited me the day of. From that point forward, I felt welcomed and motivated by my peers. I attended professional readiness events, performed outreach to high school and community college students, and much more. I even got my first internship thanks to a SHPE event that allowed me to connect with industry professionals. I was so grateful and inspired by how much SHPE benefits others, that I decided to become the Transfer Committee Lead for SHPE at UCSD. This year, I hope that I am able to give back to my community which has given me so much. My priority and biggest goal as the lead is to provide a space for transfer students to connect, learn, and evolve.

Do you feel UCSD/JSOE supports transfer students? What could they do better?

There is definitely an attempt at supporting transfer students. The resources are available and the intention is there. Sadly, there is a disconnect between theory and practice. I believe this is because there are dangerous habits and mindsets that are hindering the support of transfer students. A clear example of this is that the conversation is usually centered around how little time transfer students spend at UCSD. This gives institutions a clear conscience as they can attribute mediocre execution to an "irremediable" issue outside their scope. The flaw in this thinking is that we are using the Freshmen experience as a framework, disguising it as the most common and traditional experience. The solution to this problem begins by taking accountability and understanding the influence that each one of us have. The solution is furthered and powered by taking action and creating meaningful change. It is imperative that we create spaces to include transfer students and their experiences. And it is just as important that we, as transfer students, support and look out for each other.

What has been your proudest moment at UCSD?

I first interacted with the IDEA Engineering Student Center when I got admitted into UCSD. I saw they were offering a program to prepare Transfer students for their transition to the JSOE. I had an amazing time then and made many memories. I decided I had to keep an eye out for more events and programs organized by IDEA. I quickly became heavily involved in it. I was a mentee for TEAM, I became a Transfer Prep Leader, I will be a mentor for TEAM this upcoming year, and I even volunteered



to help organize an event for the newly admitted transfer students. It was then when I caught a glimpse of how the center organizes their programs and events very efficiently. But I also noticed that the transfer perspective was not very present within their staff. The center did the right thing by seeking out actual transfer students to provide input and support for their event. Nevertheless, it felt unfair that they were in that situation to begin with. I saw the space and took the opportunity to make a difference. I explained my thoughts to the IDEA center and they were very receptive. I proposed to create a role within their staff that helped organize events specifically for transfer students, from the perspective of a transfer student. I asked, and they listened.

My proudest moment at UCSD was when I became the first ever Transfer Experience Intern at the IDEA Center.

From your experiences, what advice would you offer current transfer students? Would you give the same advice if you knew you were speaking with a student who identified as first-gen or a person of color?

My biggest piece of advice for current transfer students is to build community. It is vital to create a support system of people that build each other up. Isolation is our biggest enemy. Many transfer students are usually in a rush to graduate. This is only unfortunate when it means that they are depriving themselves of the opportunity to create meaningful connections with peers and faculty. Professional opportunities and academic achievement are important things. But I'm a strong believer that, as human and social beings, we grow the most by learning from others. Furthermore, if I was speaking to a student who identified as first-gen or a person of color I would give the same advice, but I would add something. I would encourage them to also create and claim space for themselves. Take up room with humility but determination. No one will prioritize you, if you don't prioritize your needs and wants.