



**OCEAN  
DISCOVERY  
INSTITUTE**  
*young lives transformed through science*

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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# BETTER TOGETHER

Dear Ocean Discovery Community,

For many of us, last year was a whirlwind – the powerful forces of need and opportunity lifting us up and out at an unprecedented pace. The whirlwind settled, and we felt exhaustion, inspiration, overwhelm, and optimism. But for me, the dominant force was connection. We are bound by community and purpose, and in 2022, we set a new bar for ourselves, our students, and our community. Collectively, we accomplished so much:

- Five times as many children engaged in our summer camp programs.
- 1,000 eight-graders led climate resiliency projects, showcasing the voices we need for survival.
- Two groups of high school students conducted research on the Gulf of California, ensuring COVID would not take this life-changing opportunity from any student.
- Our Scientist-in-Residence Program resumed, making it clear that science happens in City Heights.
- Bubble Up!, after a 2-year hiatus, brought our supporters together and generated the resources needed for 100% tuition-free programs.
- 62 out of 100 Ocean Leaders began and continued in science-related careers, like Sonya, who works in environmental consulting alongside other alums at ESA, or Benny, who is pursuing a career in renewable energy.

Community and purpose have poised us for the most extraordinary year in our 20+ year history. We have brought on new, critical leaders like Carolina Barraza, an alum who will give our Ocean Leaders the guidance and expertise they deserve. Tony Figueroa, alum and community pillar, will enable the engagement of every young person in City Heights. Our board and advisory committees have emerged more impactful, showcasing the extraordinary minds and hearts in our leadership. And in 2023, Rudy Vargas, an alum, will lead Ocean Discovery as our Board Chair.

We are the organization we have strived to be, and with this team - and each of you - we will grow so 10,000 young people can transform their lives through science. This is possible because we count on one another and together, we are more powerful.



Sincerely,

*Shara Fislér*

Founder & Executive Director,  
Ocean Discovery Institute

# YOUNG LIVES TRANSFORMED THROUGH SCIENCE

To inspire the next generation of science leaders, Ocean Discovery Institute creates learning experiences for young people traditionally excluded from science due to race, income status, and educational opportunity.

Our students will join high-paying fields, break generational poverty, and change the future of science.

## OUR COMMUNITY

Our students reflect the diversity of our community.

56% HISPANIC/LATINO  
17% ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER  
11% BLACK  
6% MULTIRACIAL  
5% WHITE  
2% OTHER

100%

of students are from City Heights, an urban, low-income, and racially diverse community in San Diego





# THE PROBLEM WE ADDRESS

Too many young people are excluded from opportunities due to race, income status, and access to quality education. These students don't get hands-on science in the classroom, and most will never meet a science professional who looks like them.

These young people don't believe they can become scientists and are unprepared to pursue college and careers, keeping them out of high-paying science fields.

Because of this, generational poverty continues, and we lack the leadership needed to make discoveries that protect all people and our planet.

## REPRESENTATION IN THE WORKFORCE

Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Alaska Natives make up 30% of our workforce, but comprise only 11% of science and engineering doctorates.



# 30%

People of color in the U.S. labor workforce

# 11%

People of color obtaining science and engineering doctorates



# OUR SOLUTION

Through ongoing programs during and outside of the school day, our students do science, experience mentoring, and develop the growth mindset they need to pursue a future in science.

By concentrating on coastal school sheds, young lives are transformed by science.

All programming is 100% tuition-free and provided throughout a young person's entire development from kindergarten to career.

On the right, Ocean Leader alumna Monica Cisneros studies microbes that live in marine sediment through the Scripps Undergraduate Research Fellowship at Scripps Institution of Oceanography.



# OUR IMPACT

Our students believe they can do science, achieve in school, and pursue higher education. These young people are 62 times more likely than their peers from similar backgrounds nationwide to enter high-paying science and related fields.

These science leaders are gaining financial freedom and changing the future of science.



**62X**

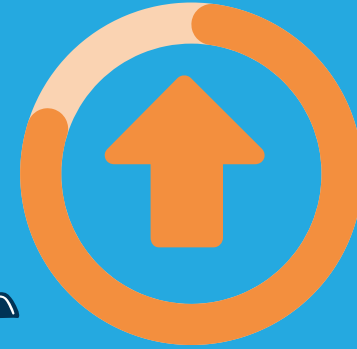
Students in Leadership Programs are **62x** more likely to attain **careers in science-related fields**



# OUR IMPACT

# 6,163

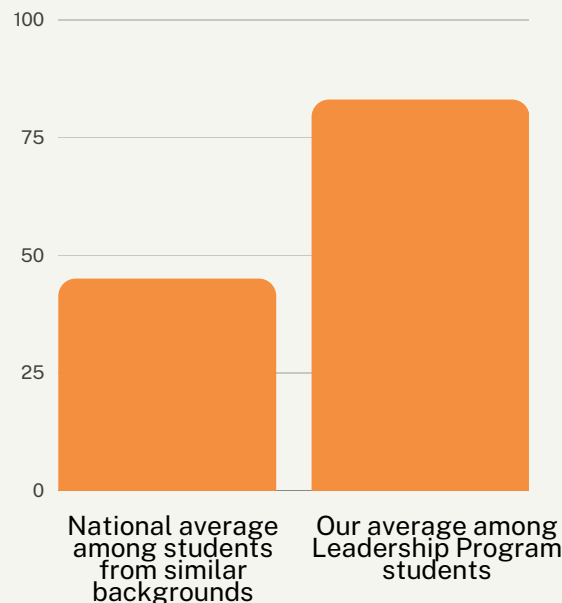
students engaged in  
tuition-free programs



Our students performed significantly  
better on state science and math  
tests than their peers at similar  
schools in our district.



*Our students were  
38% more likely to  
earn a college  
degree.*



# 100%

of Leadership Program seniors  
enrolled in higher education

# OUR PROGRAMS

## Ocean Discovery's In-School Programs

Our In-School Programs reach thousands of students each year. Today we reach the 11 elementary and two middle schools in our school-shed, and over the next few years will also grow to reach every Hoover High School student.

In-School Program students experience hands-on science lessons focused on topics from wetland ecology to climate resilience, gain exposure to science careers and mentors, and take field trips to the coast and our Living Lab.

There were a lot of “firsts” in 2022 as these programs expanded their reach: 1st graders explored the kelp forest at Cabrillo National Monument, kindergartners discovered the tide pools at the Birch Aquarium, and our 8th graders studied the effects of climate change in their community.

Collectively, these experiences inspire our students to believe science is something they can do and that a scientist is someone they can be.



## OUR SCHOOL-SHED



# TEACHER SPOTLIGHT



## VICTORIA MARTINEZ

For years, we've envisioned reaching high school students during the school day. With support from Victoria Martinez, Hoover High School biology teacher and a member of our Science Advisory Council, we are closer than ever to bringing that vision to life.

In 2022, Victoria provided input and feedback alongside other Hoover science teachers as we developed the concept for our new program. She gathered Hoover student input, including distributing a survey she created to more than 100 students and organizing a series of listening circles to learn from students what they want from our program.

The definition of a teacher and student advocate, Victoria embodies the commitment of all our partner teachers who go above and beyond for students.

We are so grateful for her support and know that new high school programming will maximize impact and truly reflect students' voices.

*"Whenever I hear my students say, 'I know this from Ocean Discovery!' I realize what a positive impact they've had on my high school biology students."*

MS. VICTORIA MARTINEZ



# OUR PROGRAMS

## Ocean Discovery's Out-of-School Program

Our Out-Of-School Program was reimagined in 2020 at the height of the pandemic and in response to changing needs of our students and families. Today, and as a result of that redesign, the Out-of-School Program is a five-day after-school camp for elementary and middle school students during the school year and over the summer.

In 2022, leveraging our growth and momentum from the year before, Ocean Discovery served more students than ever, reaching more than 900 young people with 100% tuition-free, out-of-school enrichment.

With new, hands-on science curriculum, students took part in authentic, real-world learning experiences. During the summer, students investigated the importance of sustainable fisheries, and during the school year, they discovered the wonders of our local wetlands. Most importantly, students learned how they can continue to play an active and important role in our community as young science leaders.



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## NIDIA, FOURTH GRADE

For the last several years, Nidia has been attending our Out-of-School Program. As an exceptionally curious young scientist, Nidia excels at asking great questions and can regularly be seen helping her peers understand lessons. Her continued involvement in our programming has made her a part of the "Ocean Discovery Family", and her growing confidence has made her abundantly welcoming to new students (and staff!) that join us.

Participating in our Out-of-School Program has helped Nidia reconnect with her peers and learn to make friends and connections with other families, which she and her family missed during distance learning. Ocean Discovery has been instrumental in exposing Nidia to the world of science, creating a feeling of belonging, and igniting a love of learning she hopes to continue through college and into her future.

On the right, Nidia explores one of the invertebrates she learned about during her camp experience.





# OUR PROGRAMS

## Ocean Discovery's Leadership Program

The Leadership Program is the most intensive and rigorous tier of programming at Ocean Discovery, and our high school participants are known as our “Ocean Leaders.” Beginning the summer after eighth grade, Ocean Leaders receive year-round academic support and intensive summer programming before they graduate high school. The program is designed to prepare Ocean Leaders to become science leaders who pursue higher education and ultimately enter high-paying science and related careers.

In 2022, we re-launched our international research program in Baja California, Mexico. Here, students participated in hands-on science research alongside community partners, engaged with more than 20 volunteer science and alumni mentors, and experienced life at a research field station. Excitingly, we provided the program for two different groups of Ocean Leaders, ensuring that all students had a chance to participate in this life-changing experience after years of program suspension due to the pandemic.





# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



## CAROLINA BARRAZA

Carolina joined Ocean Discovery as a high school student back in 2005. Over the years, she participated as a student, a fellow, a staff member, and most recently, a member of our Board of Directors. Carolina served as a team lead during the intensive summer research program in Baja this summer. She and other Ocean Leader alumni provided critical mentorship to our high school students. They embodied our tradition of "once an Ocean Leader, always an Ocean Leader" by giving back to our program as graduates.

Additionally, Carolina is once again joining the Ocean Discovery team as our new Leadership Programs Manager! We look forward to her continued support of our Ocean Leaders and commitment to helping us grow and develop our Leadership Program in the coming years.

*"It's incredible to see Ocean Discovery increasingly becoming an organization for us, by us! I am beyond excited to take on this role to grow passionate students with high potential into leaders that are unstoppable. As an alumna, being part of this program transformed my life, and I know leading this program will too!"*

CAROLINA BARRAZA

# OUR VOLUNTEERS

212

Total  
Volunteers

21

Alumni  
Volunteers

6,550

Total Hours  
of Volunteer  
Service

3,402

Hours of service  
provided by our  
seven AmeriCorps  
Discovery Fellows

In 2022, we continued to grow our virtual volunteer opportunities to ensure that every student had the opportunity to meet and interview a science leader. For many, it was their first time meeting a science leader.

In addition, with the re-launch of our intensive research program, we had more than 20 in-person volunteers – all of whom are science and alumni leaders – travel down to Baja to participate in research alongside our students while providing invaluable mentorship during this life-changing experience.

These volunteers are critical to advancing our mission because we know that when students receive authentic opportunities to learn and engage with science leaders who share their racial and ethnic backgrounds, they are inspired to believe a scientist is someone they can become, to achieve in school, and lead by making a difference in our world.





# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



## PERLA MEYERS

Perla is the Executive Director of the Jacobs Institute for Innovation in Education and a Professor of Mathematics at the University of San Diego. As a member of Ocean Discovery's Science Advisory Council, Perla is passionate about achieving educational equity and diversifying the STEM fields. She believes that a key step to achieving these goals is to ensure that a smile is always the initial reaction people have when they hear the word "mathematics."

In 2022, Perla leveraged her experience and passion to act as a mentor to our students in EVERY way possible. Her commitment to our students included joining us down in Baja to work alongside Ocean Leaders during their intensive research experience, engaging with students virtually and sharing her career pathway, mentoring a staff member who is earning her PhD, and now helping us evolve our mathematics mindset and ultimately make math advocacy an integral part of our programs. Perla is a model of mentorship and what is possible for our students.

*"I am truly inspired by the magic that is Ocean Discovery Institute and by the staff, scholars, and families that make up the community. The creativity, curiosity, intellect, and energy of the Ocean Leaders make me confident that our world will be in great hands!"*

*"This deliberate approach to creating culturally affirming spaces for science and self-discovery energizes the whole community and results in Ocean Discovery's impressive outcomes."*

PERLA MEYERS



# OUR SUPPORTERS

Ocean Discovery Institute's programs are provided tuition-free and we rely on support from individuals, corporations, government agencies, and foundations to keep them going. We are grateful to the many contributors who support Ocean Discovery Institute.

## LEGACY CIRCLE (Endowment Contributions)

Anonymous

Aqualia International Foundation

Fisler Family for tomorrow's  
science leaders

Shara Fisler & Family

Lynn Gorguze & Congressman Scott Peters

Bob Meinzer & Steve McIntee in honor of their  
parents, Eileen & Frank McIntee, and Marie &  
Bob Meinzer

Tara Marathe & Lawrence Lum

J.W. Sefton Foundation

## INNOVATION CIRCLE (\$100,000+)

Bank of America

California Dept. of Parks & Recreation

Conrad Prebys Foundation

Feeding San Diego

Hologic Charitable Fund

New York Life Foundation

National Oceanic & Atmospheric  
Administration

Price Philanthropies

San Diego Foundation

Satterberg Foundation

Sidney E. Frank Foundation

The Builders Initiative

## DISCOVERY CIRCLE (\$25,000 - \$99,000)

11th Hour Racing

Jenny & Tony Sweeney

Allison & Robert Price  
Family Foundation

Michelle & Dan  
Shoemaker

California Coastal  
Conservancy

Procopio, Cory,  
Hargreaves & Savitch

David C. Copley  
Foundation

Sahm Family  
Foundation

Gary & Denise David

Sycuan Casino

Yvette Diuri

Unified Port of San  
Diego

Harriet E. Pfleger  
Foundation

Walter J. & Betty C.  
Zable Foundation

Hearst Foundations

We thank you for your  
continued support of our  
programs.

# ENDOWMENT SPOTLIGHT

*"Having been involved with Ocean Discovery for over a decade, we have seen firsthand the measurable effectiveness of their programs, namely, a remarkably high rate of graduates going to college and entering science-related careers. We were inspired to help create and invest in the endowment to ensure the efforts of staff, families, students, volunteers, and all contributors into the future."*

BOB MEINZER & STEVE McINTEE

*"Our gift to Ocean Discovery Institute's Endowment Fund is an investment in empowering future generations of diverse science leaders."*

TARA MARATHE & LAWRENCE LUM

*"Our mission is to support the fields of natural science and natural history in our community. Ocean Discovery represents the excellence in science we seek. We are proud to support the endowment to ensure its mission to inspire its students to succeed in science – and life."*

J.W. SEFTON FOUNDATION

## BECAUSE WE NEVER WANT TO TURN A KID AWAY

The ongoing support of Ocean Discovery's committed donors has resulted in world-class programming, unprecedented achievements of students, and, importantly, our Living Lab, the linchpin for solidifying our permanence in the community of City Heights.

As a non-profit organization, we know that financial sustainability is synonymous with diversity. Having a diverse base of funding support is key. Diversity in funding mitigates risks and makes an organization like ours more sustainable.

To that end, in 2022, Ocean Discovery created our first-ever endowment, an important step in the future of our programs for generations of young people to come.

*"Joel and I have been involved with this organization from the very beginning. Nothing could have been more rewarding than witnessing the success of thousands of students over the past 20 years. We have supported as volunteers and donors, so the minute we learned about their effort to create an endowment, we knew we wanted to contribute. The endowment will continue to give to thousands more students long past our lifetime."*

LINDA FISLER

# ADVISORY COUNCILS

We'd like to thank the members of our Advisory Councils for their continued support in helping guide our programs, shape our goals, and mentor our students.

## Alumni Advisory Council

Adrian Alvarez-Lara  
Monica Cisneros  
Mary Cozy  
KhanhChi Dam  
Tony Figueroa  
Susan Garcia  
Merveille Kouekabakilaho  
Jared Ocampo  
Ahiram Rodriguez  
Erick Ruiz  
Santos Sillas  
Pilar Soria

## Family Advisory Council

Alejandra Mendoza  
Bertha Cruz  
Blanka Banks  
Celia Bisagra  
Esmeralda Lopez  
Esther Pintor  
Itzel Lopez  
Jannette Sanchez  
Jessie Gonzalez  
Josefina Rodriguez  
Judith Ruvalcaba  
Maria Del Socoro-  
Nicasio

Maria Hernandez  
Maria Judith Ayala  
Maria Tirado  
Maricela Ramirez  
Miriam Rodriguez  
Norma Santos  
Olivia Guerra  
Patty Pintor  
Rosy Rangel  
Sofia Herrera  
Susana Ramirez  
Yolanda Chilapa

## Science Advisory Council

Melvin Alvarez  
Heather Bentley  
Barbra Calantas  
Mark Denny  
Olivia Graeve  
Victoria Martinez  
Mathew Mitchell  
Perla Myers  
Anai Novoa  
Priti Pharkya

Marlem Rivera  
Linda Sierra  
Yonat Swimmer  
Drew Talley  
Theresa Talley  
Sagar Vaidya  
John Wang  
Tanzania Ware



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## Board Officers



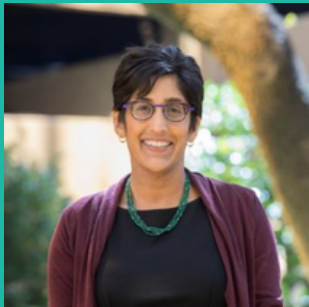
**Rudy Vargas**  
Chair



**Devon Gibson**  
Treasurer



**Heather Bentley**  
Vice-Chair



**Tara Marathe**  
Secretary

## Board Members

Barbra Calantas

Jasmine Davenport

Scott Grimes

John Johns

Kristen Koch

Jessica Mier

Matthew Mitchell

Anai Novoa

Vanessa Sandoval

## Cabinet Members

Sean Caddell

Tres Conrique

Kurt Gering

Theodore J. Griswold

Dan McClellan

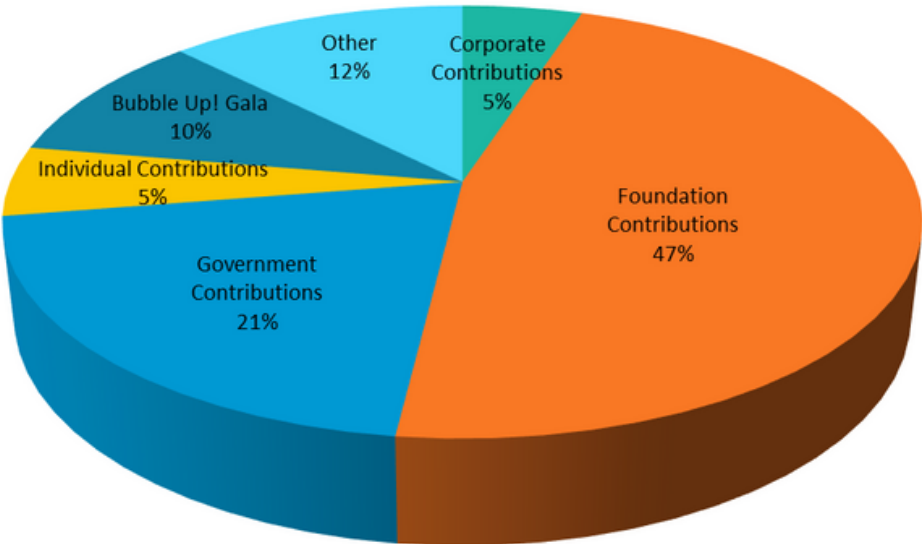
Noelle Norton

Ileana Ovalle

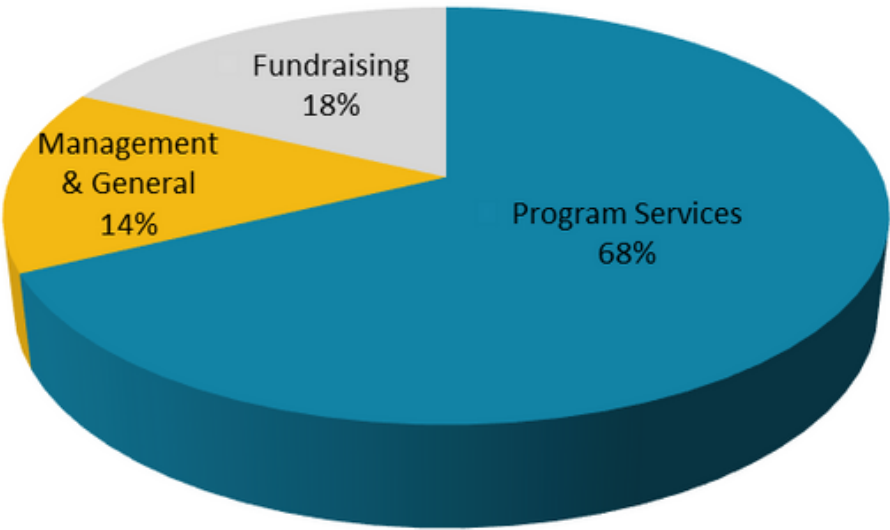
Scott Pearson

Proud recipients of  
University of San Diego's  
Kaleidoscope Award for  
Exceptional Governance

REVENUE CATEGORIES



EXPENSE CATEGORIES



# 2022 FINANCIALS

By developing a highly diversified donor base made up of national and local foundations, government agencies, corporations, and deeply committed individual donors, Ocean Discovery Institute can ensure the continued sustainability and future expansion of programming.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Revenues, gains, and other support	
Corporate Contributions	\$206,337
Foundation Contributions	\$1,921,858
Government Contributions	\$841,287
Individual Contributions	\$214,565
Bubble Up! Gala	\$401,402
Other	\$512,510
Total Revenues, gains, and other support	\$4,097,959
Expenses	
Program Services	\$2,106,004
Management and General	\$445,986
Fundraising	\$556,257
Total Expenses	\$3,108,246
Change in Net Assets	\$989,713
Net Assets at beginning of year	\$7,223,042
Net Assets at end of year	\$8,212,755



GIVE.  
LEARN.  
VOLUNTEER.



**Ocean Discovery Institute**  
4255 Thorn Street  
San Diego, CA 92105

619-795-8365  
[www.oceandiscoveryinstitute.com](http://www.oceandiscoveryinstitute.com)  
[info@oceandi.org](mailto:info@oceandi.org)