Donor support helped major initiatives to revitalize the US/Mexico border region. New environmental and social policy “action research” projects were supported along with a visit by Antanas Mockus, President of Corpovisionarios, an NGO, on the topic of municipal governance and reform. Mockus, the former mayor of Bogota, Columbia, is credited for instituting revitalization and social reforms through community-building, something that the Center on Global Justice will help implement with cooperation between the cities of San Diego and Tijuana.

In 2012, the University of California created a new teaching designation, Professor of Practice, for distinguished professionals who are leaders in their fields but do not have the academic background typically required for a faculty appointment at the university. Our Political Science department and the Urban Studies and Planning program were early advocates and helped identify Nathan Fletcher, a former California State Assemblyman.

Fletcher began his appointment in January of 2013 by team teaching a course on “California Government and Politics” with political science professor, Thad Kousser. His second course, “How to Win or Lose an Election,” was offered in April. Both courses attracted strong attendance from students and he provided extended office hours, 1:1 mentoring and connections for internships to further assist students. In July, Fletcher took a leave from UC San Diego to run for the office of mayor of the City of San Diego.

Many alumni relay that lecturers with professional experience gave them crucial real-world applications of the theory they learn at UCSD. The Professor of Practice program adds to the depth and range of teaching excellence that UC San Diego can offer students.

UCSD professors and students were on the ground in Kenya to monitor the presidential election in March 2013. The UCSD research team completed three projects in the country: 1) an exit poll, 2) a fraud intervention, and 3) a panel survey of Kenyans before the election to track their attitudes/experiences with intimidation and voting intentions. Over 1,200 polling stations were monitored by using a team of trained Kenyan citizens. These projects empowered Kenyans to monitor their elections and trained them in the use of information technology. Among the findings, preliminary results indicate that the fraud project decreased tally fraud by over 20%.

The Department of Linguistics used the development of the Dothraki language from the TV series “Game of Thrones” as a backdrop on the contemporary importance of language development and language-related research. A large student and community member audience heard from a panel of language experts about the development of invented languages, both in the real world, such as the Esperanto language, and for purposes of entertainment, such as with Game of Thrones, Avatar, and Star Trek.