

We're All In This Together: Modeling Leadership & Professionalism in Access Services



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From the Heart of the Library: Stories of
Engagement, Innovation, and Leadership

Session Overview

- About Us (10m)
- Introduction (10m)
- Examples (20m)
- Self-Reflection (5m)
- Discussion (5m)
- Questions & Further Discussion (10m)



Alcala Bazaar Spring 2026

About USD

University of San Diego Mission:

“We are a contemporary Catholic university, grounded in the liberal arts and anchored along an international border, advancing academic excellence to create a more inclusive, sustainable and hopeful world.”

www.sandiego.edu/about/mission-vision-values.php



Immaculata, University of San Diego

About Copley Library

Copley is “a place where the arts, the humanities, the sciences and the latest in technology converge — a cornerstone of campus that meets the growing and evolving needs of the students and faculty.”

www.sandiego.edu/library



Main Entrance, Copley Library

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About Me

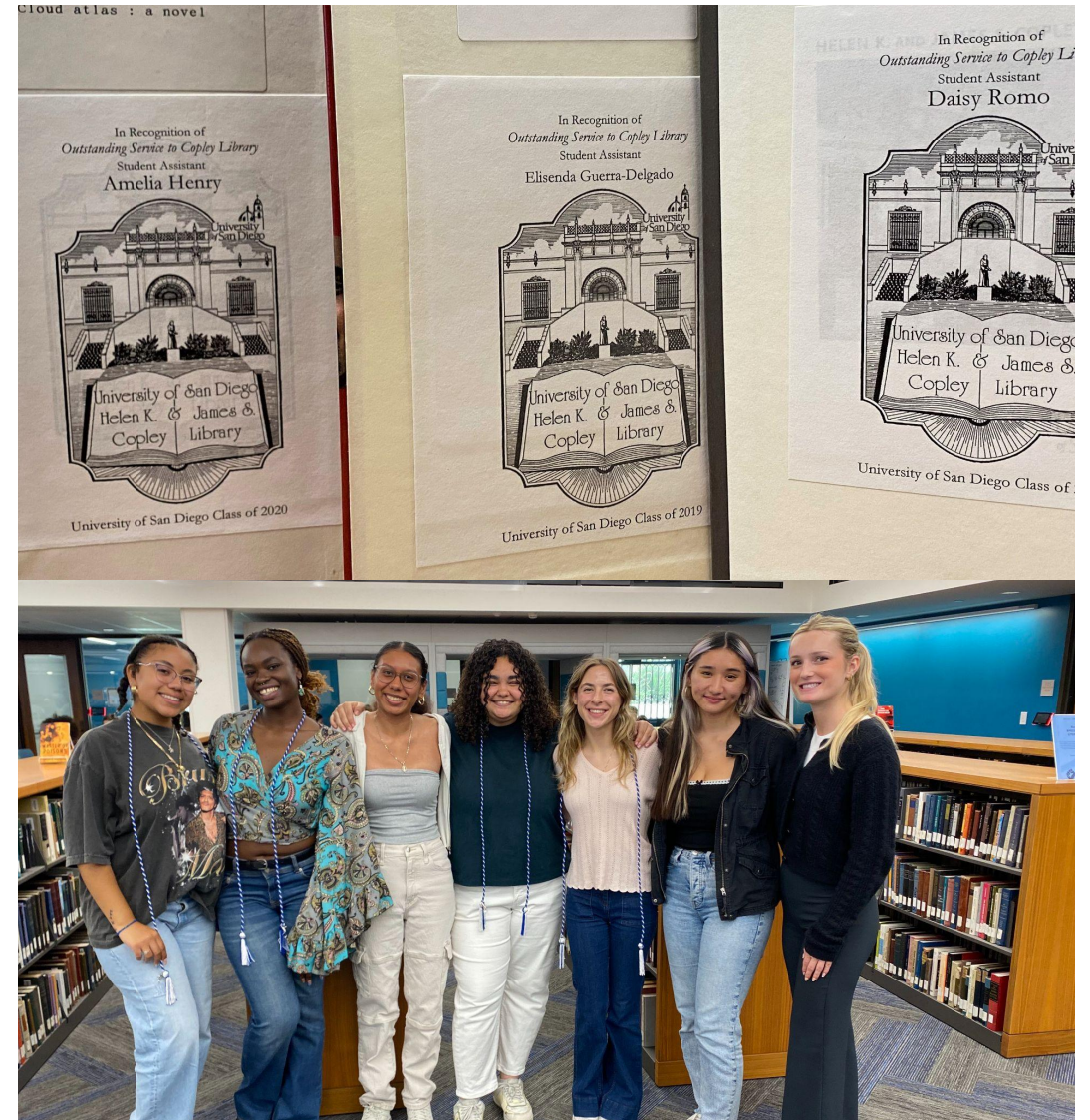
Catherine Paolillo
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Speedboat Beach, Lake Tahoe, California

My Leadership Style

- Person-centered
- Intentional & transparent
- Flexible/Adaptable
- Open minded
- Self-reflective
- Model ideal behavior



Top: selection of senior bookplates (recognition effort); Bottom: Spring 2025 Student Assistants graduating with Honors and special awards

Core Principles & Responsibilities

Access & Outreach Services

- Embody USD mission, vision, & values
- Provide exceptional customer service
- Circulate & protect materials
- Maintain safe & welcoming spaces
- Engage with community through events, outreach initiatives, and social media
- Prepare Student Assistants for professional life after graduation



Access Services Desk, Copley Library

Daily Operational Demands

Access & Outreach Services

- Circulating materials
- Stacks management
- Processing resource sharing materials
- Processing course reserves materials
- Daily building operations, including staffing two service points
- Managing room reservations
- Managing outreach activities
- Emergencies
- Planned improvements



Journals Reading Room, Copley Library

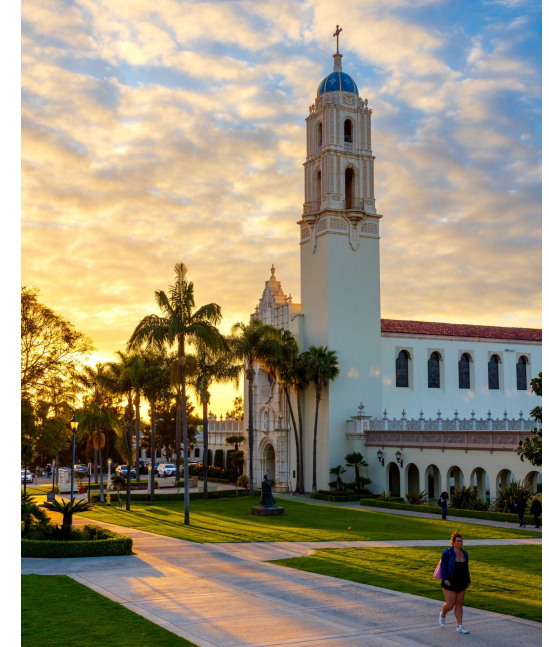
Leading with Empathy While Maintaining Accountability

Two different staff members told me they noticed you leaving Copley wearing roller skates. I checked our Student Handbook and realized we don't have a policy outlined in there about skates or skateboards, but USD [does have such a policy](#). According to USD, "Bicycles/E-bikes, skateboards, scooters and rollerblades may not be ridden in any building." I would consider roller skates in the same category as rollerblades. While I'm sure our slick new floors are excellent for skating, it's a serious safety hazard for yourself and our other patrons for you to wear them inside the building. We also hold you to a higher standard as a Copley Student Assistant, and expect you to set a good example for the other students who use our space.

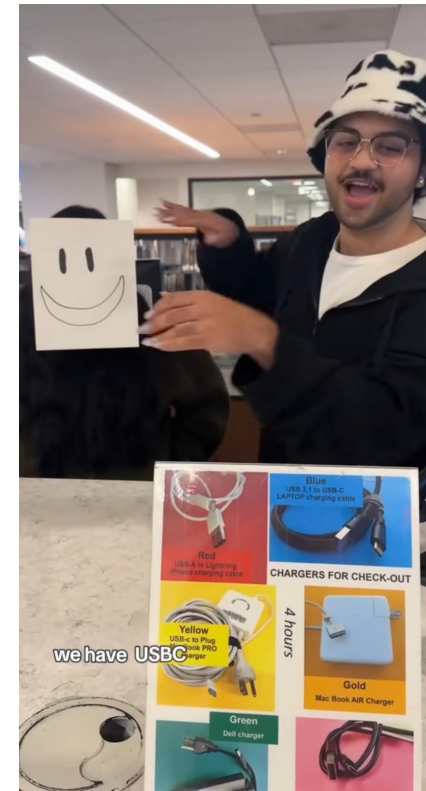
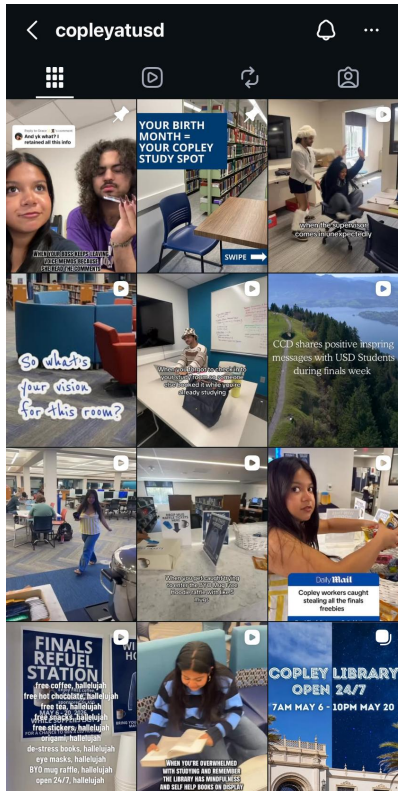
Correcting Problems in the Moment

We've hired 20 new Federal Work Study and 3 new ROTC Student Assistants this year! There will be a lot of new faces and training happening over the next few weeks. **I will be looking to you to set a good example for our new students and to help them as they get familiar with our policies and processes.** Please remember:

- **Wear work attire, not beach attire** - including closed toed shoes. You're the face of Copley Library and we need to maintain a professional and safe work environment. Sandals are a safety hazard. Dean Byrd's biggest pet peeve is ripped jeans. Think casual, but professional.
- Check in with the supervisor on duty if you need a break, don't just walk away from the desk.
- Drinks with a lid are ok at the desk, but please take a break to eat. Don't leave food out on the desk, even if it's in a sealed container. We want to keep the desk as pristine & professional as possible. As Dean Byrd says, you never know who might walk through the door.
- **Look up when someone enters through the doors and make eye contact/smile at patrons!** I don't expect you to verbally greet each person, but we must do our best to create a welcoming environment, starting with approachability. You are the first person many new students will encounter - if you are looking at a screen they will assume you're busy and might not stop to ask a question or might feel alienated.
- **It's easy to forget things over the summer - when in doubt ask a supervisor!**



Transparency and Professional Development



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Self-Reflection (5 minutes)

Student Assistants & Front-Line Staff	Supervisory Staff & Middle Managers	Department Heads & Senior Leadership
<p>What expectations are your front-line student assistants or staff not meeting? What behavior has gotten in the way of meeting your department goals? Where are you falling short of your core principles and responsibilities?</p>	<p>How do supervisor staff or middle managers reinforce expectations? What is getting in the way of meeting departmental goals? What changes can be made to better model behavior and support students or front line staff?</p>	<p>What expectations are set by senior leadership and are they explicit/documented? What support might they be able to offer to help middle managers, support staff, and students meet those expectations? Are there clear strategic goals in place? Are those communicated well to staff?</p>
<p>Example: <i>Students are providing poor customer service because they are distracted (friends stopping by to chit chat, working on homework, talking with coworkers) and forget to remain attentive during their shift(s)</i></p>	<p>Example: <i>Only a few supervisors are consistent about correcting students in the moment to reinforce expectations, so they get demoralized quickly and give up trying</i></p>	<p>Example: <i>Dept. Head expects exceptional customer service so they should set expectations for all supervisors, discuss it as a group, explain their reasoning/process, and then model the desired behavior</i></p>

Discussion (5 minutes)

Turn to the person or people next to you & talk about your self-reflection. Suggested discussion questions:

- Are your department-wide or library-wide goals & expectations communicated well to all staff?
- What is in your power to change? What specific actions can you take?
- Where are there pain points in your organizational structure?
- How might you “lead up” to get the support you need from senior leadership?

Questions & Further Discussion



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Further Reading

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2022). *Reframing organizations : artistry, choice, and leadership* / Lee G. Bolman, Terrence E. Deal. (7th edition.). Jossey-Bass.

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