UC SANTA BARBARA
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A United Front

Society needs science, and right now the discipline is in trouble.

So says UC Santa Barbara oceanographer Debora Iglesias-Rodriguez, who will make that case on stage Saturday at the March for Science. She is a featured speaker at the Santa Barbara version of what is expected to be a worldwide event.

“This march creates an opportunity to show our fellow citizens and politicians how much we value science and science education, and how concerned we are about significant budget cuts across agencies funding different areas of research, including medical and environmental,” said Iglesias-Rodriguez, a professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Marine Biology. “I am concerned about the future of our research, opportunities for jobs for our graduating students and the future of junior scientists trying to navigate a funding system that is increasingly shrinking.”

Iglesias-Rodriguez was invited to speak at the local rally by co-organizer and aquatic biology student Hannah Armer.

“As a climate scientist, I see the devastating effects of human-driven perturbation such as ocean acidification and warming as a result of our continued increase in the fossil fuel industry,” said Iglesias-Rodriguez. “We have the responsibility and the ability to act at a time of crisis, when bad decisions could mean centuries of recovery, when environmental crimes could result in food security alerts and unnecessary costs to ecosystems and human health.”

Many others from UC Santa Barbara also will participate, including 30 people from the labs of Craig Montell and Denise Montell, who even designed their own T-shirts to wear at the march.

“It’s so important that our society be driven by the facts and the truth,” said Craig Montell, a professor in the Department of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology. “The U.S. leads the world in scientific research and that’s under great threat.”

The Santa Barbara March for Science is one of nearly 500 taking place across the country and internationally. The overarching mission is to “champion robustly funded and publicly communicated science as a pillar of human freedom and prosperity… unite as a diverse, nonpartisan group to call for science that upholds the common good and for political leaders and policy makers to enact evidence-based policies in the public interest.”

The local event begins at 11 a.m. in De La Guerra Plaza, with speakers including State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson; Mayor Helene Schneider; Karl Hutterer, director emeritus of the Santa Barbara Museum of History; Denise Knapp, director of conservation and research at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden; and Raenne Napoleon, an assistant professor of chemistry at Santa Barbara City College.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.