UC SANTA BARBARA
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Going Platinum

Big wheels keep on turning. And at UC Santa Barbara, they've rolled right to an elite distinction: Platinum-level Bike Friendly University (BFU).

The League of American Bicyclists — the oldest and only grassroots advocacy organization for people who bike — awards select, applying colleges and universities in recognition of institutions' achievements in promoting and enabling safe, accessible bicycling on campus. Designations are good for four years.

UC Santa Barbara twice before, in 2011 and 2015, was rated at the Gold level. With the announcement today of 48 new and renewing BFUs across the country, UCSB cements its place in a cutting-edge group of U.S. higher-education institutions transforming their campuses and the communities around them. There are now 208 BFUs in 47 states and Washington, D.C.

"We've been working on this goal for the past four years," said Mo Lovegreen, director of sustainability for the campus. "As we move to a system that is less carbon intense, providing a safe bike path and bike parking system is crucial in getting people out of their cars and into a mode of transportation that is healthier for both themselves and the planet."

The Bicycle Friendly University program evaluates applicants' efforts to promote bicycling in five primary areas: engineering, encouragement, education, enforcement and evaluation/planning.

Of the total 208 campuses named Bike Friendly Universities in the 2019 ratings, only 4% of them — just eight institutions nationwide — are designated platinum. And three of them are UC campuses: Santa Barbara, Davis and Irvine.

“UC Santa Barbara, indeed the entire UC system, is deeply committed to becoming carbon neutral as quickly as possible,” said Ken Hiltner, a professor of English and of environmental studies who co-chairs the campus Sustainable Transportation Committee. “Since bicycles are a terrific carbon-free form of transportation, being an exceptionally bike friendly campus is great for both the UC Santa Barbara community and the planet.”

Long known for its bicycle culture, UC Santa Barbara today has 7 miles of Class 1 bicycle paths and upwards of 20,000 bike parking spots, including those at campus housing.

Among the factors that were key to the new, top-level designation: the campus’s still-young bike share program. Launched in fall 2018, UCSB Sustainability partnered with myriad entities — Associated Students BIKE Committee, Transportation and Parking Services, the purchasing department, the County of Santa Barbara, the cities of Santa Barbara and of Goleta, SBCAG, Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition, Santa Barbara Waterfront and Santa Barbara City College — to get it done.

In addition, the campus’s Sustainable Transportation Committee has been working on a master transportation plan that includes bike infrastructure.

“These two things helped us to achieve the platinum level,” Lovegreen said.

Educational outreach around biking was also crucial, said James Wagner, manager of the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). To that end, he noted, the Associated Students (A.S.) Bicycle Committee for the past three years has offered bike education events and bike light giveaways. And TAP since 2014 has partnered with UCPD and others on quarterly sales of abandoned bikes.

“UC Santa Barbara strives to increase our sustainability and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and reduce our other potentially negative environmental impacts,” said Wagner. “Since the 1960s UCSB has relied on bicycles as an ideal way to get around our relatively flat topography and mild weather. The campus now has four bicycle underpasses and nine bicycle roundabouts, a student-funded bicycle repair shop and 400 bicycle share bicycles. The campus funds maintenance of the campus

bicycle infrastructure.”

Every UC Santa Barbara student pays lock-in fees that support the A.S. Bicycle Shop and the A.S. Bicycle Committee that fund bicycle infrastructure improvements.

“Our extensive system of dedicated bicycle paths and plentiful parking means that students who never rode a bike before coming to UCSB still end up using one as their primary method of transportation,” said Sarah Siedschlag of Associated Students, who is advisor to the Bicycle Committee. “We are excited to be able to encourage such a healthy, low-impact way to travel to and from class and campus, and thank the League of American Bicyclists for recognizing us as a platinum-level Bicycle Friendly University."

UC Santa Barbara students choose bicycles more than any other means of transportation, with 55% of undergraduates riding to campus on any given day (walking is a distant second, at 21 percent). Among the overall campus population, an approximate 46% ride their bikes.

“For the last half-century, UC Santa Barbara has been associated with a distinct and dynamic bicycle culture, which has led to the development of unique and widely used standards for bicycle infrastructure design and planning,” said Dennis Whelan, associate campus architect in the Office of Campus Planning and Design. “The campus reflects the nature of UC as a research institution; with students, staff and faculty testing and developing bicycling standards that continue to evolve.”

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.