Hello!

My name is Caryn Chavez. I am the Vice President of the Professional Development Institute (PDI) and I work very closely with the many districts and teachers we serve across the country.

The Professional Development Institute offers online courses to K-12 teachers. Every course PDI offers is approved by the University of San Diego (UCSD) Extension for graduate-level credit. Our course topics include using technology in the classroom such as Google and iPads, culturally-responsive teaching, anti-bullying strategies, social-emotional learning, working with struggling readers and writers, using math manipulatives for problem solving, and many more. The Professional Development Institute is a leader in the training industry, having successfully offered online courses to teachers since 1997. Since then, we’ve trained over 175,000 teachers and have developed a reputation among school districts as a company that provides high quality courses taught by experienced and talented instructors.

Teachers choose PDI’s courses because they are challenging, yet also practical. Every course provides strategies that can be implemented immediately in the classroom. Course content guides teachers to effectively apply the theories and strategies in the classroom through activities, examples, practice exercises, assignments, and guidance from the course instructor. Teachers are actively engaged throughout the course and have multiple opportunities to interact with the course instructor and other course participants. Each PDI course is equivalent to 50 instructional hours of training.

In addition to being approved by UCSD, a number of our courses are also approved and offered directly through seven reputable universities as part of their continuing education programs. PDI is approved by the New York State Education Department (as a CTLE sponsor) and the state of Texas, as well as promoted by many school districts to teachers in need of professional development training. PDI is proud to be a woman-owned business whose owner/President, Connie Ryan, was a classroom teacher for years.

Being familiar with the questions districts ask most about our courses and the university credit, I have developed the FAQ list on the following page. If for any reason your questions are not answered, or you would like additional information, I invite you to call me at 949-263-4931. I’d be happy to share more information, answer questions, and provide course syllabi as well as course access to give you confidence in PDI and our courses.

Thank you in advance for your trust in PDI.

Sincerely,

Caryn Chavez
Vice President
District Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is UC San Diego Extension an accredited university?
   
   Yes. UC San Diego Extension is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) through the San Diego campus as part of the University of California system.

2. Is the university credit from UC San Diego Extension at the graduate level?
   
   Yes. All PDI courses are numbered using a 400-level numbering series to identify courses used by teachers for salary advancement and other professional purposes. Courses offered as part of the 400-series are post-baccalaureate, professional-level, credit bearing courses, delivered at the graduate level in the field of education, and specifically designed for teachers.

3. Can the university credit from UC San Diego Extension be used towards a Master’s Degree?
   
   It depends. Credit earned in these courses may lead to the award of a formal certificate by UC San Diego Extension or may be applied toward an academic degree or professional credential, subject to the approval of the receiving institution. These courses provide opportunities for professional or career advancement.

   If the district requires courses to be eligible for use towards a Master’s Degree, we do have a university partner who has approved PDI courses for graduate credit and to be used towards a Master’s Degree within the institution. Please contact Caryn Chavez to discuss options for ensuring this requirement can be met.

4. How many units of credit does UC San Diego Extension offer for PDI courses?
   
   UC San Diego Extension is on the quarter system. So, a PDI course worth 5.0 quarter units is equivalent to 3 1/3 semester units. This is equivalent to 50 instructional hours.

5. What is the difference between units and credits?
   
   The word unit is a descriptor of the type of credit UC San Diego issues to students who have fulfilled all of the requirements of any particular class. The terms “unit” and “credit” can be used interchangeably without altering the accepted institutional meaning of the terms.

6. Do participants interact with an instructor?
   
   Though PDI courses are offered entirely online, to enhance and reinforce the use of technology on a practical level while gaining skills and confidence in doing so, teachers communicate with other participants and their instructor as if they were in a face-to-face course. The interaction, collaboration, and communication in every PDI course gives participants a feeling of being in a traditional college classroom setting.

7. How does PDI assess participants’ knowledge of the material they are learning?
   
   Participants are assessed throughout their course using various tools such as practical lessons, projects, assignments, and formal testing. Each course has a cumulative final assignment where participants must apply what they have learned throughout the course to demonstrate full understanding of concepts and applicability in the classroom. Participants must also complete five quizzes. Grades are based on the rubrics established for each assignment, combined with test scores.