

**Office of the President**

**TO MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ATHLETICS:**

**DISCUSSION ITEM**

***For Meeting of September 19, 2024***

**UC OLYMPIANS AND PARALYMPIANS AT THE PARIS GAMES: INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The University of California’s athletic enterprise has long served as a pipeline of elite talent to the world’s most prestigious sporting competition. At last month’s XXXIII Olympiad held in Paris, UC sent 103 athletes and 13 UC-affiliated coaches. They competed in 27 sports and represented 31 different nations and five UC campuses. Across 12 sports, 32 UC Olympians won 39 medals, including 11 gold, 14 silver and 14 bronze medals.

Sports often has the power to thrill, to unite, and – importantly – to inspire. This was on full display at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games which showcased more than 4,000 athletes from around the world, competing in 549 medal events. As with the Olympic Games, the American collegiate athletics system, overall, and the University of California, specifically, are drivers of Team USA’s success on the Paralympic stage. Seventy-one NCAA schools had one or more U.S. Paralympian competing in Paris, with the University of California represented by four of its current and former student-athletes.

Eight of those UC Olympians and Paralympians will share reflections and insights about their experiences at the Summer Games, as well as about how UC prepared and supported them during their journey to Paris. They include (in alphabetical order):

**Hannah Chadwick**

*UC Davis (Class of 2016)*

*United States Women’s Cycling Paralympian, Paris 2024*

Hannah made her Paralympic debut in 2024 as a track tandem sprinter. She and her pilot, Skyler Espinoza, placed 6th in the one kilometer and three kilometer time trials on the track in the women’s “B” category. Hannah and Skyler are two-time Parapan champions and two-time world medalists. They hold the national record for the women’s “B” one kilometer time trial on the track. Hannah discovered sports as an adult and has been on Team USA for Para Cycling since 2022.

Hannah received a double major in International Relations and Mandarin Chinese from UC Davis and graduated in 2016. In addition to being an athlete, Hannah works at Disability:IN, a nonprofit that promotes disability inclusion around the globe.

You can read more about Hannah [here](#):

### **Sienna Green**

*UCLA Women's Water Polo (2023-present)*

*Australia Women's Water Polo Olympic Silver Medalist, Paris 2024*

Sophomore Sienna Green won a silver medal with the Australian women's water polo team in her Olympic debut in Paris. Green played in all seven games at the Olympics and totaled three goals, two rebounds and two field blocks.

During her freshman year at UCLA in 2023, she earned All-America honors and was selected to the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation All-Newcomer team after scoring 39 goals and seven assists for 46 points.

For more about Sienna, click [here](#).

### **Gizem Guvenc**

*UCLA Women's Swimming (2022-present)*

*Turkey Women's Swimming Olympian, Paris 2024*

Senior and psychology major Gizem Guvenc made her Olympic debut in Paris, competing for Turkey in the 4x200 meter freestyle relay semifinals. She swam the third leg for Turkey in the 4x200 meter freestyle relay semifinals.

Guvenc who is the Turkish national record-holder in the 200 LCM (Long Course Meters) freestyle and the 200 SCM (Short Course Meters) freestyle, earned All-America honors in the 800 meter freestyle relay as a sophomore at UCLA. She has also totaled six individual victories and helped lead the Bruins to a Top 15 NCAA finish at the National Collegiate Athletic Association Championships in 2023.

For more about Gizem, click [here](#).

### **Joanna Hayes**

*UCLA Director of Track and Field/Cross Country (June 2024-present)*

*United States Track and Field Olympic Gold Medalist, 400m Hurdles, Athens 2004*

Joanna Hayes is in her second month as UCLA's Director of Track and Field/Cross Country. She previously served as an assistant coach for the Bruins from 2014-16 and was a four-time West Region Assistant Coach of the Year at the University of Southern California. Among the athletes she coached was former Bruin Rai Benjamin, who won two Olympic gold medals in 2024.

A member of the UCLA Athletic Hall of Fame, Hayes won the 1999 NCAA 400 meter hurdles title and a total of seven conference titles while earning six All-America honors. In 2004, she won Olympic gold, breaking a 16-year Olympic record with a winning time of 12.37 seconds in the 100 meter hurdles. Also that year, she won the 2004 Jesse Owens Award as USA Track &

Field's outstanding female athlete and finished as the number 1-ranked 100 meter hurdler in the world.

For more about Joanna, click [here](#).

### **Johnny Hooper**

*California Men's Water Polo (2015-2018)*

*United States Men's Water Polo Olympian, Tokyo 2021; Paris 2024*

Johnny Hooper was one of the most prolific scorers in the NCAA during his time at Cal from 2015-18. Hooper amassed 245 goals during his intercollegiate career, which is the third-most all-time in Cal history. He led the Golden Bears to the 2106 NCAA championship and was a three-time Association of Collegiate Water Polo Coaches (ACWPC) All-American and a finalist for the prestigious Peter J. Cutino Award, which is given annually to the top player in the country.

Paris marked Hooper's second Olympic appearance after also participating in the 2021 Summer Games in Tokyo, and he played a big part in Team USA winning its first medal since 2008. The United States surprised many by advancing to the semifinals of the 2024 Summer Olympics and ultimately defeating Hungary in the Bronze Medal match, giving Team USA hardware for the first time since capturing the silver medal at the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing.

Hooper earned his degree in business administration and management from Cal's Haas School of Business in 2019.

For more about Johnny, click [here](#).

### **Leo Merle**

*UC Santa Cruz Men's Cross Country (2016-2019)*

*United States Men's Track, 2024 Paris Paralympics (6th place, 1500m T38)*

Leo Merle competed as a NCAA Division III track and field athlete during his four years at Santa Cruz, from 2016-2019. He chose Santa Cruz primarily for its reputation in the biological sciences, its unique campus, and the chance for him to continue running competitively.

It wasn't until 2019, his third year at UC Santa Cruz, that Merle raced as a para-athlete, competing at the U23 U.S. Nationals in Minnesota. At the race, Merle set the U23 national record for the 5000M among T-38 athletes. (In para-sport, athletes are placed in classifications of similar abilities to ensure a level playing field and strong competition. Merle has cerebral palsy, a disorder that affects mobility, posture, and balance). He then won gold in the Men's T38 1500 meter at the 2023 Parapan American Games. The Parapan Games were a qualifier for the 2024 Paris Paralympics. He finished sixth at the Paris Games. He hopes to be the first American with cerebral palsy to run the 1500 meter race (known as the metric mile) in less than four minutes.

Merle (Rachel Carson College) earned his bachelor's of science degree in molecular, cellular, and developmental biology from UC Santa Cruz in 2020. He earned his doctorate of dental surgery at the University of Michigan School of Dentistry in 2024.

For more about Leo, click [here](#)

## **Tara Prentice**

*UC Irvine Women's Water Polo (2018-2022)*

*United States Women's Water Polo Olympian, Paris 2024*

Tara Prentice made her Olympic debut in Paris, starting in all seven games and recording five goals for the United States women's water polo team in 2024. She earned 18 exclusions, and had two assists and two blocks, while owning a shot percentage of 63 percent, totaling five goals on eight shot attempts.

Before she starred on the national team, Prentice graduated from UC Irvine as one of the most decorated female athletes in history. Prentice was honored as a four-time All-American, three-time first-team All-Big West selection, two-time NCAA Woman of the Year nominee and the 2022 Big West Player of the Year. She broke the UCI scoring record and became the top goal scorer in The Big West with 242 goals. In 2022, she set the UCI single season scoring record with 74 after logging 70 goals in 2019, the third most in program history in a single season. While at UCI, Prentice was the member of two Big West Championship teams, making two NCAA appearances. She was named Big West Player of the Week nine times in her career.

Prentice was just as impressive out of the pool being named UCI/Big West Scholar Athlete of the Year in 2022. In 2020, she completed her undergraduate work with degrees in Political Science and Criminology, Law, and Society before ending with a master's in Demographic and Social Analysis as well as another in Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

For more about Tara, click [here](#)

## **Camryn Rogers**

*California Track and Field (2018-2023)*

*Canadian Hammer Throw Olympian, Tokyo 2021; Paris 2024*

Camryn Rogers reached the pinnacle of her sport in Paris, winning the gold medal in the women's hammer throw with a mark of 252 feet, 6 inches. That culminated a brilliant ascension to the top for Rogers, who first made her mark as a three-time NCAA champion in the sport during her time at Cal.

Rogers is one of the most dominant hammer throwers in intercollegiate history. Not only did she become just the second woman ever to win three straight NCAA hammer throw titles, but she also left Cal with the top 10 throws in collegiate history. That includes the NCAA-record mark of 254-10.

Rogers also won the World Championship in the hammer throw in 2023 with a mark of 253-4. Her personal-best throw of 257-11 is the fifth-best mark of all-time in the event.

While at Cal, Rogers was a finalist for the Honda Sport Award and NCAA Woman of the Year. She was a dual-major in society and environment and political economy while also earning a master's degree in cultural studies in sport and education.

For more about Camryn, click [here](#).

## BACKGROUND

### UC Olympians

If UC was a country, its contingent of 103 athletes who competed at last month's summer games would have ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of the 206 participating countries. They represented five of our campuses include Berkeley, Los Angeles, Irvine, San Diego, and Santa Barbara. Click [here](#) for a list of all participating UC athletes (both current students and alumni) and coaches, along with the following information for each individual: sport, country, campus, role (i.e., athlete or coach), and medal(s) won (if applicable).

### COUNTRIES THAT HAD THE MOST UC OLYMPIANS

RANK	COUNTRY	# of UC OLYMPIANS
1	USA	40
2	Canada	9
3	Australia	7
4	France	4
5 (tie)	Germany	3
5 (tie)	Great Britain	3
5 (tie)	Israel	3
5 (tie)	Netherlands	3

Source: [UC Office of the President](#) (as of 8/12/24)

### UNIVERSITIES THAT SENT THE MOST ATHLETES TO THE PARIS GAMES

The NCAA had 1,238 current, former, and incoming athletes compete at the 2024 Summer Games. They represented 253 universities. Here are the schools which sent the most athletes:

RANK	UNIVERSITY	# OF ATHLETES <sup>1</sup>
1	Southern California	59
2	Stanford	54
3 (tie)	Cal	41
3 (tie)	Michigan	41
5	Florida	40
6	UCLA	34
7 (tie)	Louisiana State	33
7 (tie)	Tennessee	33
9	Texas	32
10 (tie)	Florida State	28
10 (tie)	Georgia	28
10 (tie)	Pennsylvania State	28

Source: [NCAA](#) (as of 8/12/24)

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<sup>1</sup> When an athlete has competed for multiple schools (e.g., Raj Benjamin who ran track for both UCLA and USC), she/he is counted for each by the NCAA.

## UC OLYMPIANS WHO REACHED THE MEDAL PODIUM

Boasting more than 670 medals since 1920, the University of California's athletic enterprise has a winning tradition at the world's pinnacle of sporting competitions. At the Paris Games, alone, 32 UC athletes won 39 medals, including 11 gold, 14 silver and 14 bronze medals. If UC were a nation, it would have racked up the 11th-most medals in the world.

CAMPUS	TOTAL MEDALS WON	# OF MEDALISTS	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
Cal	23	18	5	11	7
UCLA	14	12	5	3	6
Irvine	2	2	1	0	1
TOTAL	39	32	11	14	14

Source: [UC Office of the President](#), [UCLA](#), [Cal](#), and [Irvine](#) (as of 8/14/24)

The following is a list of the thirty-two UC Olympians who stood on the podium at the Paris Games:

NAME	SPORT	COUNTRY	CAMPUS	MEDAL
Mykolas Alekna	Track and field (men's)	Lithuania	Cal	silver
Jack Alexy	Swimming (men's)	USA	Cal	gold, silver
Hunter Armstrong	Swimming (men's)	USA	Cal	gold, silver
Georgia Bell	Track and field (women's)	Great Britain	Cal	bronze
Luca Cupido	Water polo (men's)	USA	Cal	bronze
Brooks Curry	Swimming (men's)	USA	Cal	silver
Caileigh Filmer	Rowing (women's)	Canada	Cal	silver
Johnny Hooper	Water polo (men's)	USA	Cal	bronze
Kitty Lynn Joustra	Water polo (women's)	Netherlands	Cal	bronze
Ollie Maclean	Rowing (men's)	New Zealand	Cal	silver
Rowan McKellar	Rowing (women's)	Great Britain	Cal	bronze
Olav Molenaar	Rowing (men's)	Netherlands	Cal	silver
Ryan Murphy	Swimming (men's)	USA	Cal	gold, silver, bronze
Sydney Payne	Rowing (women's)	Canada	Cal	silver
Camryn Rogers	Track and field (women's)	Canada	Cal	gold
Christian Tabash	Rowing (men's)	USA	Cal	bronze
Adrian Weinberg	Water polo (men's)	USA	Cal	bronze
Abbey Weitzeil	Swimming (women's)	USA	Cal	silver
David Smith	Indoor volleyball (men's)	USA	UC Irvine	bronze
Kevin Tillie	Indoor volleyball (men's)	France	UC Irvine	gold
Rai Benjamin	Track and field (men's)	USA	UCLA	gold, gold
Jordan Chiles	Gymnastics (women's)	USA	UCLA	gold
Tom Daley	Diving (men's)	Great Britain	UCLA	silver
Chase Dodd	Water polo (men's)	USA	UCLA	bronze
Sienna Greene	Water polo (women's)	Australia	UCLA	silver
Bronte Halligan	Water polo (women's)	Australia	UCLA	silver
Jrue Holiday	Basketball (men's)	USA	UCLA	gold
Max Irving	Water polo (men's)	USA	UCLA	bronze
Micah Ma'a	Indoor volleyball (men's)	USA	UCLA	bronze

NAME	SPORT	COUNTRY	CAMPUS	MEDAL
Garrett Muagututia	Indoor volleyball (men's)	USA	UCLA	bronze
Daniella Ramirez	Artistic swimming	USA	UCLA	silver
Mallory Swanson	Soccer (women's)	USA	UCLA	gold

Source: [UC Office of the President](#) (as of 8/14/24)

### **UC Paralympians**

UC's four Paralympians represented four of our campuses include Cal, UC Davis, UC Irvine, and UC Santa Cruz.

The following is a list of the four UC Paralympians who competed at the Paris Games:

NAME	SPORT	COUNTRY	CAMPUS
Bryan Larsen	Paracycling (men's)	USA	UC Irvine
Hannah Chadwick	Paracycling (women's)	USA	UC Davis
Leo Merle	Track and field (men's)	USA	UC Santa Cruz
Noah Jaffe	Swimming (men's)	USA	UC Berkeley

Source: [UC Office of the President](#) (as of 9/8/24)

### **UC PARALYMPIANS WHO REACHED THE MEDAL PODIUM**

At the Paris Paralympics, UC Berkeley student Noah Jaffe won a silver medal in the men's 100 meter freestyle and a bronze medal in the mixed 4 x 100 meter freestyle relay.