

Trustee



Tina S. Nova

Tina Nova is a farmer's daughter whose father believed in hard work and filled her school vacation hours with mowing the fields on a blue Ford tractor. She grew up among the irrigated fields of California's San Joaquin Valley in an era when girls took homemaking classes, boys took science, and most never left the farms.

"I had a lot of time to daydream on that tractor," Tina has said. But she did more than dream: She worked hard and earned a degree in Biological Sciences from UC Irvine, then a PhD in Biochemistry from UC Riverside. As an NYU postdoc, she developed antibodies that were licensed to Hybritech, San Diego's first biotech firm – a company that lured her to San Diego as a researcher, and launched her career as a scientist, an entrepreneur, and eventually one of her industry's noted Top 10 Women in Biotech.

After rising from researcher to executive at Hybritech, Tina held executive positions at Selective Genetics, Nanogen, and Cypress Bioscience, and in 2000 co-founded Genoptix, a diagnostics and biopharmaceutical services company. In 2014 she was hired by Illumina as senior vice president and general manager of its oncology business.

But she couldn't resist the call of the start-up, and today she is President and CEO of the newly formed molecular diagnostic company, Molecular Stethoscope, Inc. The company is focused on circulating RNA which can be utilized for the assessment of specific organ health and disease.

"I've been connected with UC San Diego since I first came back to California," she says. "The companies I've worked with have hired graduates from UC San Diego in many fields – molecular biology, biochemistry, biostatistics, computer science. I think it's a fantastic university." As a volunteer, "I've served on advisory boards and have been asked to speak many times to groups of women." Currently she is helping to shape the new Rady Children's Hospital Pediatric Genomics Board.

As a UC San Diego Foundation Trustee, Tina enjoys being involved with "the whole picture, the big strategy for UC San Diego. Understanding the vision, and how it all fits together. It will be fascinating to have a global look at the university, and participate at that level."

She's also looking forward to contributing expertise. "When you work at something for 30 years, you can contribute. I'm a product of the UC system, and I'm very proud of that. When I arrived at NYU and all the other postdocs were coming from Yale, Harvard or MIT, I thought I'd never be able to compete.

"But it was just the opposite. Because I'd come from UC, I was ahead because I'd worked directly with my professors. The other postdocs never saw their professors. I was given a different level of experience. I wouldn't be where I am without this education, so to come back and contribute, that feels really good."