We nominate Jim Galvin for an Exemplary Staff Employee of the Year Award for his extraordinary service to the diverse students of the UC San Diego community.

In his role as Director of Global Seminars and the Opportunities Abroad Program Jim works with staff, faculty, and students to create and deliver vibrant and varied study abroad opportunities. The Global Seminar programs have added diversity to international programming, increased the number of students studying abroad, and provided access to abroad opportunities to underrepresented groups. Over fifty programs have been launched through 2013 due to Jim’s dedication and Herculean efforts. Jim mentors, educates, and advises staff and faculty on how to best advise and promote these opportunities to students. He advises students how to find the best programmatic fit academically, personally, and in support of their long-term career goals. Jim’s commitment to reaching out to diverse student groups goes above and beyond his job responsibilities because, as is known from alumni surveys and academic data, he understands how study abroad experiences contribute to students’ engagement, retention, and persistence to graduation. Jim’s effort manifests this primary goal of the Programs Abroad Office: to make study abroad accessible and available to all students at UC San Diego so that they return and persist to graduation.

One example of Jim’s extraordinary service to students is the amount of personal after-hours time he has volunteered over the past five years to the PRIME program. Founded in 2004, the Pacific Rim Experiences for Undergraduates is a 30-week research internship for STEM students that includes a 9-week summer experience at a research laboratory abroad. Jim and another advisor were asked to do pre-departure orientations for the PRIME students and due to Jim’s past experience working in health-related fields he was extremely interested in and committed to working more closely with this population of STEM students who are underrepresented in study abroad at UC San Diego. Over the past five years, Jim has dedicated an enormous amount of his personal time to participating in PRIME info sessions, reading applications, interviewing students, and helping prepare the selected students for their experiences abroad. He has worked closely with the faculty members who run PRIME to incorporate much more of an emphasis on the PRIME students’ development of cultural competencies before and during their time abroad. Jim has been instrumental in preparing skill set inventories to assess students’ cultural competency levels and then running 6-week long programs engaging the students in reflective learning practices to help them develop and understand these cultural competencies. Jim has also worked many late nights and weekends preparing presentations and writing research proposals and papers with the PRIME faculty as they reach out across the country to secure permanent funding for this transformative program.

Another example of Jim’s commitment to students is his outreach to students who identify as LGBT and are interested in studying abroad. Jim has taken on the role of staff advisor and liaison on many occasions to work with student interns and staff at the LGBTRC to develop panel presentations that consist of students who identify as LGBT and have studied abroad. Jim’s thoughtful, sensitive and diplomatic approach helps him facilitate these panels in such a way that returnees may share their experiences safely with others who may have concerns about what it’s like to study abroad at any given point in their LGBT-identity development. Jim has devoted time to finding country-specific information and resources for students who identify as LGBT so that he can best inform students about challenges and success they might encounter while abroad. Jim has done work to increase information and resources in our office available to LGBT students but has also engaged in conversation with PAO and UCSD staff about effective ways to disseminate this information, offering their availability in a range of manners and degrees of privacy.

Yet another example of Jim’s commitment is his tireless work to reach out to African-American students at UC San Diego. Jim has engaged in many conversations with staff, faculty, and students on campus to understand how better to attract African-American students to study abroad experiences and to support their selection of opportunities that match their goals and needs. He has presented at several BSU GB meetings to pro-actively field members’ questions, address concerns, and describe pathways to experiences abroad, inviting and including faculty in these unprecedented outreach efforts. In short, Jim embodies the Principles of Community through his activism, and his commitment to building community at UC San Diego. Jim truly deserves this award.