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SDSU launches new center for real estate

By **JEN LEBRON KUHNEY**, The Daily Transcript
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San Diego State University announced the launch of The Corky McMillin Center for Real Estate on Wednesday.

"I think we can offer a program that combines academic rigor with exposure to real-world professionals," said Michael Lea, the center's new director.

The center hopes to enhance the educational experience of SDSU real estate majors by connecting students with local real estate professionals and industry observers, as well as fostering academic research.

Lea said one of his short-term goals is to bring increased exposure to SDSU's real estate department.

The program will kick off in January and work closely with current real estate department faculty as well as the student-run Real Estate Society.

Lea said SDSU's program differs from the University of San Diego's Burnham-Moores Center for Real Estate in that it will hone in on undergraduate studies and host smaller seminars.

Though USD has an undergraduate real estate major, it offers a specialized Masters of Science in Real Estate.

Additionally, it hosts some of the largest local real estate-focused conferences in the county.

"I don't see us trying to compete with USD," Lea said. "What San Diego State, its school of business and its advisory committee would like us to focus on is the undergraduate level -- that's where we're unique."

Lea, a 30-year real estate and finance practitioner, said he has worked with the university's advisory committee since summer to put together a comprehensive undergraduate program.

Prior to joining the SDSU faculty, Lea held high-level positions at **Countrywide Financial Corp.**, **Freddie Mac** and **Imperial Corp. of America**. Additionally, he taught at Cornell University, the University of California, San Diego and the Wharton International Housing Finance Program at the University of Pennsylvania.

Currently, he is a principal of **Cardiff Economic Consulting**.

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