

**LEADERSHIP
TEAM
2023 – 2024**



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December 18, 2023

Dear Members of the Tech Trek Community,

After careful consideration and discussion, the leaders of AAUW California and the Tech Trek program, with the knowledge of AAUW National, have determined that the UC Santa Barbara camps Blackwell and Hypatia will be on hiatus for the 2024 season. This decision was made to address concerns that have been raised regarding the camp experience.

These concerns were brought to light via unsolicited reports from participants as well as from a formal survey of campers and staff to evaluate the camp's overall climate. Based on a thorough assessment of the feedback, it was determined that some action was necessary in order to assure that the camp effectively delivers the Tech Trek mission in an environment that supports social and emotional learning.

While this decision may disappoint those who were planning to attend UC Santa Barbara camps, we believe closing the camp for 2024 will give leadership an opportunity to evaluate and retool the camp's operations. We will take this opportunity to thoroughly review and improve the camp experience. During this suspension period, we will conduct a comprehensive assessment of our operations, evaluate staff training procedures, and implement necessary changes to ensure a positive and enriching experience for all future participants at this and every other camp. Our goal is to ensure that the camps meet the high standards of the state's flagship program in an environment where safety and well-being are of the utmost importance.

This is a final decision, made after an extensive process of deliberation, including consultation with AAUW National.

It is natural that this will generate some questions, which are addressed below:

Is this a permanent closure?

- That is unknown at this time. The 2025 camps will be announced later in 2024 and may include Santa Barbara and other newly formed camps.

What information prompted this decision?

- The Tech Trek leadership received some incident reports about events at the camp which were thoroughly investigated. It is not appropriate to share the exact nature of the reports nor from whom they were received. However, they prompted leadership to follow up with an extensive formal survey of camper and staff experiences which suggested that some issues required evaluation and oversight.

Why can't issues with the camp be addressed in time for a 2024 opening?

- The feedback from the 2023 campers and staff suggested that many of the camp's issues were systemic and not easily addressed without more evaluation. The time and resources required are in short supply as we must focus on kick-starting the season for the other camps and continuing the efforts we have already started to offer new camps at other venues.

What will happen to the campers that normally go to UC Santa Barbara?

- They will be given the opportunity to attend a different in-person camp. Allocations will be made based on branch requests in the typical process held in January. Efforts are underway to expand capacity at existing camps and branches may also take advantage of the virtual camp option.

What if students are reassigned to camps with different sponsorship fees than the branch had anticipated?

- Branches will pay the rate charged by the camp.

Will there be changes in the UC Santa Barbara staff or operations if it reopens?

- It is likely that this review process will lead to changes, some of which will extend to all camps to improve operations and accountability and assure consistency.

Who will be notified of this decision?

- Branch presidents and branch Tech Trek coordinators, UC Santa Barbara camp staff, the state Tech Trek Committee, other members of the Tech Trek community, and AAUW National.

What options will the camp staff have?

- Staff may apply for positions at other camps.

What actions will the branch coordinators need to take?

- The Tech Trek coordinators of the affected branches will receive information about where their campers will be allocated, based on their requests, during the typical allocation process held in late January. They should advise their nominating teachers of the change of venue, as well as parents if nominations are already underway.
- Branches should continue to send their deposits to UC Santa Barbara. The funds will be moved to the correct camp once the camper allocation is finalized.

We appreciate the impact of this decision and assure you it was not made lightly. We are respectful of the efforts of all involved with the Santa Barbara camp through the years. However, it is our responsibility to provide oversight to ensure we meet our highest priority to provide an outstanding experience to the young girls entrusted to us.

Further questions may be directed to Mary Isaac, Tech Trek Program Director, at techtrek@aauw-ca.org.

Sincerely,

Sandi Gabe
AAUW California State President
statepresident@aauw-ca.org

Mary Isaac
AAUW California Tech Trek Program Director
techtrek@aauw-ca.org