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OLYMPIC AND
PARALYMPIC
HOPEFULS KEEP
THEIR DREAMS
ALIVE, P. 18

360

TOKYO 2020 21



Olympian Whitney Ashley ('12) wants another shot at a gold medal.

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2017 gold medal winner, Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)



SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since I assumed the role of president at San Diego State University two years ago, I have noticed that two things distinguish our Aztec family when faced with difficult challenges. First, an immediate surge of resolve inspires our community to work together, propelling us past obstacles. Second, and simply stated: We defy expectations.

Remember when SDSU Mission Valley (p. 9) was only a dream? Or when no one predicted that our men's basketball team would become the last standing undefeated team in the nation (p. 4)? As you read the stories on the following pages, I hope they remind you of the indomitable Aztec spirit that has made SDSU what it is today.

In many ways, that spirit is what this issue is about.

You'll find it in the story of SDSU's Olympic and Paralympic hopefuls (p. 18), who are pursuing their dreams with grace and grit despite the delay of the Tokyo 2020 Games. And in the stories of astronaut Ellen Ochoa, artist John Baldessari and baseball player Stephen Strasburg (p. 23)—determined alumni who rose to the top of their fields.

The Aztec spirit is why I am optimistic about our future, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related challenges we will face for some time. My hope is that you too will be encouraged by our collective capacity to weather these storms, especially as you learn about the remarkable ways our community is responding (p. 7).

As we look to the fall and the years ahead, I am confident that we will emerge stronger and more resilient than ever. Our new Strategic Plan provides a roadmap to the future we are building together. Read how our Strategic Planning Committee—guided by thoughtful feedback from thousands of students, faculty, staff, alumni and community partners—arrived at the five strategic priorities that will guide us for the next five years (p. 12).

I am thrilled that you continue to be part of the SDSU story. For 123 years, SDSU has produced more than 400,000 alumni who are impacting our local community, the nation and the world, and that will not change. Around the world, our graduates will continue to shine as the curious, compassionate and courageous leaders the future needs.

Together we will continue to defy expectations and make the dreams of thousands of students come true.

Adela de la Torre, Ph.D.



Top photograph: Sandy Huffaker. Center: Raymond Gorospe.

Top and bottom photographs: Sandy Huffaker. Center: © Sidney B. Felsen, courtesy of the estate of John Baldessari.



ON THE WEB

SPOTLIGHT ON MEN'S BASKETBALL

Read about what members of the 2019-2020 team are up to now. sdsu.edu/magazine



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18 TOKYO DREAMS DEFERRED

SDSU's Olympic and Paralympic hopefuls set their sights on the 2020 Games ... now postponed until 2021.

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How three notable alumni used SDSU as their launchpad to achieve great success.

30 WORTH THE COMMUTE

From first-generation college student to world traveler: Karen Molina's education helped change the trajectory of her life.

TAKE OUR READER SURVEY!

We're redesigning 360 and would love to hear your thoughts.

Tell us what you think at sdsu.edu/magazine.



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COMPASS

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26 and Ooooh!

Number of games the men's basketball team went undefeated—the longest streak in the nation—before ending the season with an overall record of 30-2. SDSU tied its program-best ranking at No. 6 in the final Associated Press (AP) poll. Guard Malachi Flynn was named the Mountain West Player of the Year and picked up second-team NCAA Consensus All-American and AP All-American honors. Head Coach Brian Dutcher was named the Mountain West Coach of the Year and USA Today's National Coach of the Year. If only we had a chance to see how far the team would have gone in the NCAA Tournament, which was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Number of new exoplanets that SDSU astronomers helped discover in 2019-2020. These circumbinary planets have two suns in their sky.

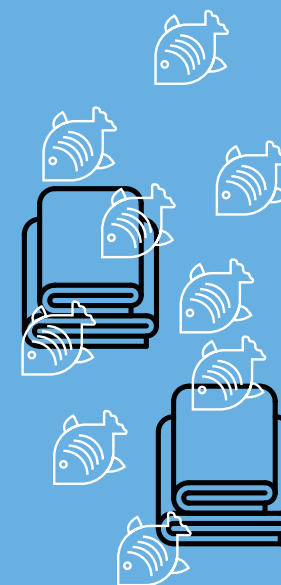


No. 8

National ranking of the online master's degree program in education, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.



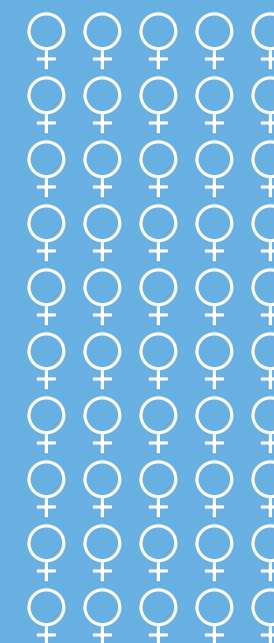
55/ Number of foods and herbs—including honey, licorice and oregano—found to have an antimicrobial effect on gut microbiota. The research by Lance Boling, a molecular biologist and research associate, and Professor Forest Rohwer, a viral ecologist, represents a new way to harness food as medicine.



Two/ Alumni on the 2020 *Forbes* "30 Under 30" list: Brandon Leibel '12 and Steven Ford '12, co-founders of Sand Cloud, a beach towel company with a mission to help save marine life.



MILLION DOLLARS/ National Science Foundation S-STEM grant will foster future chemists by helping Southwestern College transfer students gain lab and research exposure at SDSU.



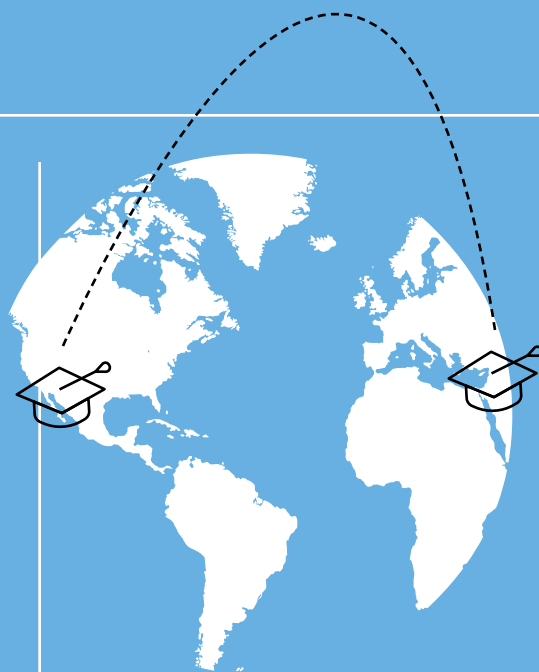
50/ Years of Women's Studies; Chicana and Chicano Studies; Educational Opportunity Programs at SDSU. The Women's Studies program was the first in the nation and the Chicana and Chicano Studies program was one of the first of its kind in the nation.



19

Number of Super Bowl halftime shows SDSU Director of Athletic Bands Bryan Ransom has helped stage, including this year's show co-starring J. Lo and Shakira on Feb. 2. "We call it the 24-minute miracle," Ransom says. His crew has seven minutes to get the stages set up, then four minutes to break them down before the players retake the field after the 13-minute show.

The Lady Elizabeth, a dual cryogenic liquid bi-propellant rocket that SDSU students in the Rocket Project club designed and built soared to record heights on Feb. 1 in the Mojave Desert and was successfully recovered.



First Ever/SDSU

Georgia held its inaugural commencement June 3, 2019, at the historic Rustaveli Theatre in Tbilisi. President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili and SDSU President Adele de la Torre each addressed the 55 new graduates. Nearly half earned degrees in computer engineering. "It was a joyful event," says Halil Güven, dean of SDSU Georgia. "It was the first time that an American university held their commencement ceremony in Georgia, wearing American-style university gowns and singing the alma mater of San Diego State University and the national anthems of both countries. This year, 87 graduates joined SDSU's Virtual Commencement Celebration on May 16.



Two MVPs/ Kawhi Leonard (NBA Finals MVP) and Stephen Strasburg (World Series MVP) became the first players from the same university to be named MVP of one of the four major U.S. sports championships in the same year. #AztecsForLife



ALSO... Leonard's SDSU jersey was retired to the rafters of Viejas Arena on Feb. 1.

\$148.5 Million

Research grants received in 2018-2019

10/ Percentage increase over the previous year

COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO COVID-19

The novel coronavirus pandemic has led to an unprecedented global health—and societal—crisis. SDSU faculty, staff, alumni and friends rallied together to rise to the new challenges. Here's how they...



Transitioned everyone to virtual learning—fast.

In early March, James Frazee ('97, '04) was tasked with leading the university's shift from classroom learning to virtual instruction. SDSU's Chief Academic Technology Officer drew upon his first-responder training as a former professional lifeguard and dove straight into the challenge.

"It was just full battle stations," says Frazee, who is also associate vice president of Instructional Technology Services (ITS). "I was in back-to-back Zoom meetings with President de la Torre, Provost Ochoa, the deans and my ITS colleagues."

The university has a lot of moving parts, he says, and everybody was pulling their weight, communicating with the University Senate and colleagues in the Imperial Valley and tracking developments—pretty much nonstop.

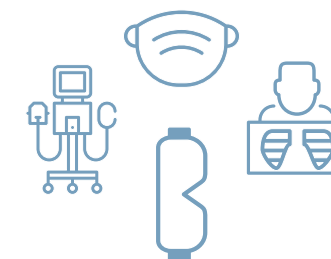
ITS consists of 22 staff members and three administrators. The team needed to enable thousands of faculty members—the majority of whom had no previous online teaching experience—to deliver virtual instruction to students as quickly as possible to complete the semester.

The first thing they did was launch a virtual instruction website for faculty complete with a "Virtual Instruction Primer" (VIP) video and a VIP workshops page. "It's all brand new," Frazee says. "We created it from scratch and it is all constantly evolving."

ITS hours were extended and on-line instruction veteran faculty members from each college were enlisted to assist any colleagues who needed help. Graduate assistants were recruited and individual college virtual support teams collaborated with ITS to help smooth the transition.

"Honestly, I'm building the plane while I'm flying it," Frazee says. "The current situation is unlike anything we have ever dealt with in our lifetime, so we are all working hard to adapt to serve the educational needs of our faculty and students."

—Tobin Vaughn



Donated medical supplies to health care workers.

With frontline medical workers facing shortages of the personal protective equipment (PPE),

members of the SDSU community started gathering up any supplies on campus that might help.

Faculty and staff in the School of Art and Design collected about 100 N95 particulate respirator masks, 50 general purpose masks and 500 pairs of nitrile gloves from associate professor Sondra Sherman's jewelry and metalsmithing studio and donated them to Scripps Health, where ceramics lecturer Ashley Kim is a nurse. "Having taken care of a sick 35-year-old COVID patient last night, the donations of these critical supplies, such as gloves, masks and gowns, really touch my heart," Kim says.

Several student organizations also rounded up essential supplies. Dani Phan, president of the Aztec Racing Team, gathered the PPE she had ordered earlier in the year for her team, which would no longer need it given the pandemic. And she reached out to other student organizations to join the effort.

Together, they have donated 300 N95 particulate respirator masks, 200 P100 respirator filters, 2,000 gloves, 120 safety glasses and many other crucial pieces of PPE such as Tyvek coverall suits to a Sharp HealthCare donation center.

The Anthropology department even offered up a portable X-ray machine to San Diego County and the School of Nursing chipped in with a ventilator. Both devices will remain on campus until the county needs them.

—Lisa Haney



Answered the call for critical research.

When the U.S Department of Defense announced a design challenge in March in response to COVID-19 for easy-to-make, low-cost ventilators, Kevin Wood was one of many researchers who responded.

The assistant professor of mechanical engineering rallied two of his master's students, Jack Lucas and Tyler Lestak, and got to work. Their goal: Assess what was already out on the market, and design a device that would be affordable but would not require manufacturing of new parts.

What they came up with is a low-cost mechanical assisted breathing device that can be easily assembled using readily available, off-the-shelf parts and common medical supplies. Total cost: \$300.

From design to working prototype, the device was invented on an accelerated time frame, and made possible thanks to collaborations, both on and off campus, representing SDSU's thriving collaborative research environment. The researchers completed initial testing and are working on additional testing with colleagues.

"SDSU researchers have stepped up at a critical time," says Nick Macchione, San Diego County Director of Health and Human Services Agency. "Professor Wood and his students have put

in yeoman efforts and the county appreciates how resourceful and supportive the San Diego research community has been. This type of applied research will help us identify life-saving solutions for the future."

Lucas and Lestak, who were working toward graduating in May, actually put aside their own thesis work to focus on this project.

Wood says, "Their efforts are nothing short of heroic."

—Padma Nagappan



Raised money for students in need.

As the pandemic struck, members of the University Relations and Development and SDSU Alumni teams immediately started thinking about how they could raise money to directly help the students who would be impacted financially. They launched the **Text "SDSU" to 2022 to Donate \$15** and sdsualumni.org/supportstudents micro-giving campaigns.

By mid-May, alumni and friends donated nearly \$80,000.

The funds, which went to SDSU's Economic Crisis Response Team (ECRT), were much needed. During the fall 2019 semester, approximately 230 students requested assistance. This March alone, it was more than 450 students. Many, particularly service workers, lost their jobs

when businesses were ordered to close indefinitely to help slow the spread of the coronavirus.

"Students ask about food resources or getting support for paying their rent with the lack of income that they're now dealing with," says Chelsea Payne ('13, '14), ECRT coordinator. "I try to respond as quickly as I can because I want them to know there is someone here to support them."

In January, ECRT helped Robert Stoebe, a communication major from the Palmdale-Lancaster area who intends to graduate next fall, get temporary housing after he lost his house and most of his belongings in a fire. He was able to keep his studies on track while he found another house to share with three roommates and worked nights full-time as a bar manager.

Then COVID-19 delivered another blow when the bar where he worked was shut down and he lost his paycheck. So, for the second time, he connected with Payne. "Without hesitation, she met me the same day with a \$100 gift card to Trader Joe's and I went there and made it stretch as far as I possibly could to fill up my shelves," he says.

"I don't like to ask for help from people," Stoebe says. "But it's a scary world we live in right now and I feel like with what's going on I'm just doing my best to get by."

Stoebe has filed for unemployment and hopes to return to his job when the coronavirus threat subsides. For now, he stays home and studies, determined to stay on track for graduation. He is grateful to SDSU and the ECRT for helping him shoulder the load. He says, "This school is amazing and I can't thank everybody enough for what they have done for me."

—Tobin Vaughn

MISSION VALLEY UPDATE

PREVIEW THE STADIUM AND RIVER PARK PLANS

Designs will reflect San Diego and offer spaces for community. [By Jeff Ristine](#)

A multi-use stadium for sporting events and concerts, with local restaurants and food trucks, vibrant garden areas and standing-room "piers" that evoke a coastal vibe.

That's the vision for Aztec Stadium, slated to be among the first projects on the SDSU Mission Valley campus. Now it's one step closer to reality after The California State University Board of Trustees approved the design and financing plan for the 35,000-capacity stadium in late March. *(Continued, next page)*



A rendering of a garden area inside Aztec Stadium. Image by Gensler & Associates.



A rendering of The Piers area at Aztec Stadium, with standing room views of the field. Right: An aerial view of the stadium. Images by Gensler & Associates.

Interested in donor opportunities or future ticket sales? Visit aztecstadium.com and click Become an Insider.



STADIUM RECEIVES \$15M GIFT THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DONOR MRS. BASHOR

San Diego philanthropist Mrs. Dianne L. Bashor donated a \$15 million lead gift toward the construction of Aztec Stadium in December 2019. “This gift is a commitment to not only a great university, but the San Diego community,” Mrs. Bashor says. SDSU will name the stadium’s field Bashor Field in honor of her generosity. Here’s a look at the woman behind the gift.

She loves her community. Mrs. Bashor and her late husband, Jim Bashor, are known for their significant gifts to many local institutions including the San Diego Zoo and the San Diego-Imperial Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Neither attended SDSU.

She loves sports. In addition to Aztec football and basketball, Mrs. Bashor follows the teams at USC, Mr. Bashor’s alma mater. She’s a Los Angeles Chargers fan and would love to see an NFL team back in San Diego one day.

She has a day named after her. In September 2019, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors proclaimed Dianne Bashor Day for her generosity and dedication to the community.

“SDSU is fortunate to have a generous friend in Mrs. Dianne Bashor,” says Vice President for University Relations and Development Adrienne Vargas. “Her gift is a reaffirmation that after more than 123 years, this university continues to earn widespread support.”



Mrs. Bashor receives a jersey during an Aztecs men's basketball game on Feb. 11.

SDSU continues to work with the City of San Diego toward completing the purchase of the land.

“We designed the stadium with the entire community in mind,” says John David Wicker, SDSU director of Intercollegiate Athletics. “We want every person in San Diego to have a reason to come.”

The signature element will be The Piers [pictured above], he says. Inspired by the San Diego coastline, they will offer standing room to view the field, with one section that juts out over seating. Wicker envisions people renting out the space or, as the rest of the campus gets developed, gathering for social events.

The stadium will include San Diego-specific design features throughout, such as references to the ancestral

homelands of the Kumeyaay people and to the dairy farms that once filled Mission Valley. Landscaping will reflect various regions of the city, including canyon-inspired areas. “The furniture will feel very Southern California, very outdoors,” Wicker adds.

Developed concurrently with the stadium, an environmentally-conscious River Park is part of more than 80 acres of open space in SDSU Mission Valley.

Glen Schmidt of Schmidt Design Group, landscape architect for the project, says input from community and environmental groups influenced park details and “improved our design decisions.”

For example, there was a lot of interest in active play, so the park includes six multi-use fields. A “ribbon of

shade”—50 feet wide and 900 feet long under the existing elevated trolley track—will run along the property’s south side with picnic areas, fitness and basketball courts, a skateboard area and ping pong tables. An eastern section will have space for dogs and kids to run. Pedestrian and bike trails will encircle the entire property. An amphitheater hill may host live performances.

“We look forward to more San Diegans being part of the everyday campus experience,” says Gina Jacobs, associate vice president of Mission Valley Development, “whether it be through enjoying music or theater in the amphitheater or the opportunity to learn about the site’s history and biology along the many trails through the restored riparian environment.”

SDSU will expand our global impact, unifying the university through a common mission and identity. Under a single name, the multi-campus university includes the San Diego campus, SDSU Imperial Valley, SDSU World Campus, the Mesa, a future SDSU Mission Valley location, regional microsities and other programs around the globe and online. No matter SDSU's campus or program location, the collective mission is to support the educational and economic development of communities while creating a sense of unified belonging for students, faculty, staff and alumni. We span the entire California-Mexico border and serve the world.



WE ARE SDSU.



BECOMING A PREMIER PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY: A NEW KIND OF HSI.

SDSU will forge a path to become an R1 Doctoral University where excellence and access converge. To achieve this long-term institutional goal, SDSU will leverage its unique stature as a community-engaged, border-connected, Hispanic-Serving Institution located on Kumeyaay land. We are committed to developing infrastructure and resources that enable our research activity to grow while continuing to support excellence in teaching.

2020 VISION

A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN REIMAGINES SDSU'S FUTURE. HERE'S A LOOK AT THE FIVE PRIORITIES AND WHAT THE PLAN MEANS TO SDSU AND ITS ALUMNI.

FIVE PRIORITIES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN



RESILIENCE. DESIGNED TO THRIVE.

SDSU is committed to building a resilient and sustainable university through innovative practices. We must develop new revenue streams to meet our scholarly and teaching aspirations, our dedication to community and diversity, and the athletic endeavors of the university. We commit to using our resources with transparency, equity, efficiency and accountability in alignment with the university's goals. As citizens of a larger global community, SDSU proudly embraces the principles of responsible environmental stewardship.

SDSU will be a global leader in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in research, teaching and in community engagement. At SDSU, the mark of our global leadership will be an innovative institutional infrastructure that promotes and supports diversity, equity and inclusion in everything we do: research, teaching, professional development, student experiences in and outside the classroom, and community relationships. Our values compel us to foster such an environment, where community members of all identities can thrive. We embrace SDSU's identity as a Hispanic-Serving Institution on the border and recognize our residence on Kumeyaay land.



EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN EVERYTHING WE DO.



STUDENTS AT OUR CORE.

SDSU commits to a future where all students are able to achieve their greatest potential. Our collective efforts will elevate SDSU as a national exemplar, providing education and training for the innovators and leaders our region and global society demand. SDSU will provide access to success through transformational experiences in and outside of the classroom for undergraduate, graduate and lifelong learners. With an enduring commitment to innovation, resilience and to our students, we will cultivate a university culture and infrastructure that facilitates an affordable, student-centered, life-long educational journey, supported by every member of the SDSU community.

2020 VISION

A Q+A WITH J. LUKE WOOD ABOUT THE NEW STRATEGIC PLAN. / BY JEFF RISTINE

Since September 2019, the university community has been working to create a new strategic plan—coupled with a parallel plan for diversity, equity and inclusion—to set San Diego State University’s vision and mission for the next five years. Following meetings with campus stakeholders and feedback from nearly 4,000 individuals including alumni, the Strategic Planning Committee proposed five priorities in January. The five-point plan is intended to guide SDSU’s growth and commitment to teaching, research and creativity toward a goal of transforming student lives and engaging our communities. It will be formally finalized this summer.



360 spoke with J. Luke Wood, co-chair of the planning committee and chief diversity officer for the university, about the development of the plan and what it means to SDSU and its alumni.

Q What makes this a good time for SDSU to develop a strategic plan, and why is it important to have one?

SDSU had a strategic plan under the previous administration, and the time frame for that has ended. There were a lot of great things accomplished, but now we need a new plan to help guide the next five years, for the university’s future and beyond. We have a new president who has a vision for our university. We have a lot of new faculty and staff. And we have a new campus that we’re building in Mission Valley that provides a lot of opportunities for us to think about how we can grow our research capacity, grow our impact on this region. Having a plan of how to do that is important so that we are being as strategic as possible with the resources we have.

Q Why are you excited about this plan and what it means for San Diego State’s future?

It will help unify the campus under a common mission and priorities. One of the areas that I’m particularly excited about is “We are SDSU,” which is really recognizing SDSU is multiple sites. We have our campus here on the Mesa, we have SDSU Imperial Valley, we have new microsites that are taking off across our community

colleges, as well as SDSU World Campus, and so these create different opportunities for us to have the SDSU impact really at a national and international level.

Q What’s the most important element the San Diego State community should know?

It is not only a strategic plan, but a diversity plan integrated into one comprehensive plan. That is different from what most other universities have done. It represents a bold path forward for us to consider our future in light of the fact that we are in a global marketplace, and it allows us to think about how diversity allows us to be even better at what we do in research, teaching and service.

Q Was there anything in particular from the alumni that stands out as a contribution?

One of the more nuanced pieces was around our public image and the athletic prowess of the university, and how that has oftentimes served as a mechanism to ensure that our alumni remain connected to the campus.

Q What sets this strategic plan apart from the plans of other colleges and universities?

Building a campus in Mission Valley and the integration of diversity, equity and inclusion make this plan totally distinctive from what we would see anywhere else. We have a larger team—33 people who have been meeting regularly—in combination with the nearly 4,000 people who participated in the process thus far. That’s helping us be as reflective as possible of the wants, desires and hopes for the future that we have from our community.

Q What are the next steps toward implementation?

We will form a team that will oversee the implementation. It needs to be put into life and to serve as a living document that guides what we do. We’ll then probably have action teams around each of the strategic priority areas that will be comprised of students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members, all coming together across areas to ensure that we are not missing any pieces. ●

Photograph: Courtesy of J. Luke Wood.

WHAT EXACTLY IS IN THE TIJUANA RIVER?



SDSU’s public health researchers are testing the water to find out.

By Kellie Woodhouse

The fog is just beginning to lift on an overcast February morning as Lilianna Landin dips a sampling stick into the Tijuana River. The water in the vessel at the end of the pole looks clear, but Landin and classmate Alex Fox will take it back to the lab and test for harmful bacteria, toxicants and pollutants.

Downstream from the South Bay collection site, the river empties into the Pacific Ocean at Imperial Beach, a community that restricts access to its coastal waters much of the year due to high concentrations of human waste in the water. Sewage flows into the United States from Mexico via the waterway—the result of aging sanitation systems in Tijuana and overburdened water treatment systems near the border—and pollutes the vital Tijuana River National Estuary and nearby coast.

Landin and Fox are part of a team of students helping San Diego State University public health professor Kari Sant test water from more than a dozen sites along the Tijuana River, border-region tributaries and estuary.

"The bacteria levels are high. It's concerning to see how high they are, especially during certain weather events," says Fox, a master's student studying public health and Latin American studies.

When rainfall overwhelms existing treatment systems near the border, it brings particularly high concentrations of potentially noxious materials and bacteria—like *E. coli* and other fecal coliform—into the waterways. The result is poor water quality that puts the public and environment at risk, especially in heavily trafficked areas of southern San Diego's shoreline. A heavy rainfall can close coastal waters as far north as the tourism-dependent beach community of Coronado.

"It's not just a U.S. thing, it's not just a Mexico thing. It's a transborder issue," Fox says. "It's been eye-opening. The river is not just an important ecosystem, but a lot of people live around it and interact with it. Just being aware of that allows you to ground yourself in the research."

Providing a Baseline

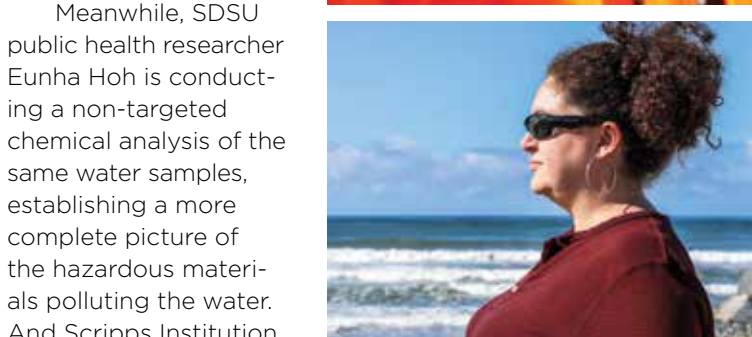
Though water quality at the border is a widely acknowledged issue, there is no comprehensive understanding of which pollutants—outside of unsafe levels of human waste and related bacteria—threaten the river and surrounding communities.

Sant is hoping to change that by forging one of the most comprehensive and collaborative analyses of the health of the Tijuana River in recent history. Her team is testing water as soon as it enters the U.S. from the border, following the flow of the river until it reaches the ocean.

"We are looking near recreational and residential sites, so we can contextualize data and find out whether any of these materials poses a public health risk," Sant explains. "I want to bridge different areas and look at it more comprehensively than has been done before. You don't know what's out there until you look for everything."

She is sequencing bacterial DNA found in the water and determining levels of harmful pathogens, which can sicken people and animals and impair critical habitats. Wildlife like fish rely on the water to provide enough oxygen to survive, but bacteria can deplete oxygen levels.

Sant has already found that water quality improves drastically as the river flows through the estuary wetlands. She wants to assess whether the plants and soil in the salt marsh filter and purify the water as it flows toward the ocean. Test sites near the border have bacteria levels exponentially higher than what is considered



environmentally safe following major rainfall. Yet, water near the ocean often meets California's surface water recreation goals, unless it has rained recently.

Meanwhile, SDSU public health researcher Eunha Hoh is conducting a non-targeted chemical analysis of the same water samples, establishing a more complete picture of the hazardous materials polluting the water. And Scripps Institution of Oceanography researcher Dimitri Deheyn is analyzing the water for microplastics, which can persist in the environment and potentially harm wildlife and people.

Researchers are in the data collection phase of the project and plan to analyze results in the summer.

The effort comes at just the right time. As part of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement reached in December 2019, the federal government earmarked \$300 million to improve water quality near the U.S.-Mexico border and clean up the river and estuary. Sant's project will provide a critical baseline of information just as the Environmental Protection Agency considers how to allocate the funds.

"The work Sant is doing is critical," says Jeff Crooks,

Opposite page, from top: Debris and pollution in the Tijuana River; student Lilianna Landin holds up a river sample from the day's collection; public health professor Kari Sant looks out at the ocean at Imperial Beach. This page, from top: Kelsey Faust (left), Landin (center) and Alex Fox (right); a danger sign at Imperial Beach warns against swimming in the sewage-contaminated water. Page 15 and Sant photographs by Kellie Woodhouse. Other photographs by Scott Hargrove.



research coordinator for the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, who has worked closely with Sant. "The ultimate goal is to improve water quality, but we have to measure and understand the system in the first place so that we can use data and science to make sound decisions."

Sant's work is just one facet of SDSU's research enterprise near the border. University researchers are studying climate change, plant life, pollution and public health issues in the region. Sant and Hoh, along with associate professor of environmental engineering Natalie Mladenov and others, are studying water scarcity as part of the Blue Gold Area of Excellence Initiative. SDSU also launched its first RE:BORDER Conference in 2019, with the aim of tackling pressing issues by collaborating with researchers from institutions on both sides of the border.

"IT'S NOT JUST A U.S. THING, IT'S NOT JUST A MEXICO THING. IT'S A TRANSBORDER ISSUE," ALEX FOX SAYS. "IT'S BEEN EYE-OPENING."



Vital Experience

For Sant, the project goes far beyond helping improve water quality in the border region—it's training and inspiring the next generation of public health researchers.

"It's been really meaningful to the students because they are going to be the ones working on this issue as they go out into their careers," she says. "They are getting to apply their public health skills and knowledge to a critical real-world problem."

Back in the lab after the morning at the collection site, environmental health master's student Kelsey Faust pours water samples into beakers, mixing them with reagents that will help her measure the concentration of pollutants like nitrates and phosphates.

After a few minutes, the liquid in one flask turns dark blue—indicating high levels of phosphates due to untreated sewage in the water.

"We've seen some crazy stuff," says Faust, referring not just to what's in the water samples but to the process of collecting them. Some of her fellow students have gotten stuck in the mud, but they don't mind. She says, "It's been good to get the hands-on experience, to get out in the field and get dirty."



WHITNEY ASHLEY ('12) IS READY TO THROW DOWN

2020 was going to be Whitney Ashley's year.

In 2012, the discus thrower made it to the U.S. Olympic Team Trials—only to finish dead last in the competition. Ashley was coming straight off her Aztec career as NCAA champion but found herself unprepared for the Olympic-level pressure. "I was a deer in headlights," she says.

In 2016, after four years of hard work

TOKYO DREAMS DEFERRED

SDSU's Olympic and Paralympic hopefuls had their sights set on the 2020 Games. Now, due to the coronavirus pandemic, they're adapting to an extra year of preparation and sacrifice.

By Lisa Haney

and international competition, she was back at the Trials. This time, she finished first and made it to the Rio Olympic Games. But as she was about to do her first throw, it started to rain. Hard. The 2.2-pound discus slipped out of her hand, along with her Olympic dream. "I blinked and it was over," she says, "and I thought, this is what my four years has come to?"

At first, Ashley was depressed. But soon she decided to give her sport another four years and shoot for Tokyo 2020. She started watching hours of video each day, analyzing all the meticulous details of world-class throwing. She improved her diet, started meditating. "It became vital to focus on the fundamentals and attention to detail," she says.

She's had to solve for other challenges too. In 2017, her coach at her Chula Vista, California training center was fired, and she made the decision to move to Kansas to be near her

new coach. Since losing her Nike sponsorship after Rio, she's gotten creative with smaller sponsorships like a local winery in Kansas and donations on her website (whitneyashley.com).

"I've struggled in these last four years mentally and physically, emotionally, financially, you name it," Ashley says.

Now she has to add another year to her journey.

Her training facilities are closed but she's throwing on concrete into an open field with her coach, lifting in the garage and following yoga videos on YouTube. The winery, under financial strain, paused her payments. Still, Ashley remains positive.

Whenever she gives inspirational talks to kids, she tells them: Things aren't always going to turn out the way you want them to. It's how you respond that matters. "Here I am," she says, "still standing."

Photograph: Raymond Jackson

ADAPTED ATHLETES TAKE ON THE WORLD

SDSU Adapted Athletics was created just two years ago, to provide student-athletes with disabilities the opportunity to excel at a collegiate level. Already, many are on track to make Team USA for the Tokyo Paralympic Games.

The student-athletes in the Ambulatory Track and Field program—plus sprinting coach Isaac Jean-Paul [pictured, left]—qualified for the 2020 U.S. Paralympic Team Trials. Now, with the Trials and Games postponed

until next summer, the athletes are doing their best to stay in competitive shape from home.

“We’re all training with what’s given to us where we live,” says Amanda Malawski, a sprinter with cerebral palsy (CP) who qualified for the 400-meter dash. The sophomore criminal justice major is running in her Sugar Grove, Illinois neighborhood and focusing on drills and core exercises. “This obviously isn’t ideal, but it just gives us more time to become better athletes,” she says.

Michelle Cross [right], a 100-m and 200-m sprinter with CP who has ranked in the Top 40 in the world, is in a similar situation in her Rancho Santa Margarita, California

hometown. “My dad was able to get me some equipment but, for the most part, it’s all body weight exercises,” says Cross, a junior criminal justice major.

Mikayla Chandler, a field athlete with dwarfism who’s been ranked No. 10 in the world for shot put, is in a slightly better position at her home in Massachusetts. “Luckily for me, my dad set up a mock throwing field in my backyard a few years ago,” Chandler says.

The teammates are also doing their best to stay in touch with each other and their coaches, and to maintain a positive attitude through the challenges. Cross says, “At least we won’t have to wait until 2024.”



ANDREA MEDINA ROLLS WITH THE PUNCHES

Andrea Medina started boxing when she was five years old. Her father, Juan, had taken her to check out a karate place for lessons but when she spied a boxing ring next door, she told him, “I want to do that.”

A few years later, Andrea was competing—local, then national, tournaments—with Juan, who had boxed in his youth, as her coach. “But I really knew I could do something with the sport when I went to the Junior Olympics at 15 and beat the world champion,” Andrea says. She’s been dreaming of the Olympics ever since.

By the time the coronavirus pandemic hit in spring, Andrea, now 20, had already made the USA Boxing 2020 Olympic Team in the 125-lb. weight class and was training at the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She just needed to place in the top three at one more international tournament to secure her Tokyo spot. Then the Games got delayed for a year everyone got sent home.

Andrea’s staying optimistic, though. “This is just more time to perfect my craft and work on the little things I need to work on,” she says. “It can get me better and stronger.”

Nicknamed “The Boss,” Andrea is known in the ring for her fancy footwork, mean left hook and an aggressive attack style. But all that skill is just 10 percent of boxing, Juan says. “Ninety percent is mental,” he says. And Andrea’s mental game going toward Tokyo is strong.

To focus on her goal, the junior criminal justice major from Chula Vista had taken the spring semester off from SDSU, and took online courses around her training last fall. Now she needs to decide whether to take another year off. She’s eager to get back to her studies but Tokyo remains her priority.

“I’m so excited to have this opportunity,” Andrea says. “I just imagine myself walking in the opening ceremony, and getting that gold medal.”



Bottom left and right photographs: Sandy Huffaker. Top right: Michael Osorio.

GET THESE SWIMMERS SOME WATER

Swimmers need a pool. “You have to stay in the water to keep your feel,” says Morganne McKennan, a qualifier for the 2020 U.S. Olympic Team Trials in the 100-meter breaststroke.

But as pools closed in March due to the pandemic, SDSU’s Olympic hopeful swimmers were left on dry land. Then the Trials got postponed to 2021.

By early April, Morganne [pictured, right] had been out of the water for a month—the longest stretch since she began swimming competitively at age 4. “It’s just weird—17 years of swimming ending so abruptly,” McKennan says.

As a senior graduating in December, she finished her Aztec career this Spring as an All-American. She had hoped to top it off by making it to at least the semifinal rounds of the Trials. Now she has to decide whether to keep training. “As of now I’m ready to start my life outside of the water,” she says.

Teammate All-American Courtney Vincent [center] will also graduate in December and have to decide whether to compete in the 100-m butterfly at the Trials next year. Meanwhile Kristina Murphy [left], who will be a junior in the fall, is still training (pool-less) to compete in the 200-m breaststroke. She says, “What’s comforting me right now is that everybody’s in the same boat.”

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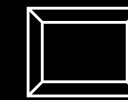
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Ad design by Youssef Abdalla ('20, graphic design)

BEFORE THEY WERE STARS



**ELLEN
OCHOA**



**JOHN
BALDESSARI**



**STEPHEN
STRASBURG**

These alumni rocketed to the top of their fields (Ochoa, literally)—as an astronaut, artist and professional baseball player. But first they were local kids who came to State. The university became the launchpad that helped them achieve success on a national scale—
and beyond.



RE: BORDER 2020

SECOND ANNUAL BI-NATIONAL CONFERENCE

ELLEN OCHOA

From La Mesa to Mission Control

In the late 1970s, San Diego State University offered little refuge from the blatant sexism that chased many women out of what are now known as the STEM fields.

“Well, you know, course work’s really difficult,” an electrical engineering professor told student Ellen Ochoa when she came by to explore a possible major. He picked up some components she didn’t recognize in an effort to further daunt her. “You’ll have to work with these.”

Luckily, Ochoa—who went on to become an astronaut and director of the Johnson Space Center—found a more receptive home in the physics department, where a professor told her of possible jobs associated with a physics degree.

“That was incredibly important because I didn’t know any scientists,” Ochoa said, recounting the story during her October 2019 visit to SDSU to receive an honorary doctorate. “I honestly had just no concept of what it is that you did with a physics degree, which is probably one of the reasons I hadn’t thought about it prior to that.”

Her 1980 bachelor’s degree in the subject served as a springboard to a master’s degree and doctorate in electrical engineering from Stanford University, three patents as a co-inventor in optics, four trips into Earth’s orbit and five years at the helm of the space center from 2013 to 2018.

Physics professor Jeff Davis, who recommended Ochoa to Stanford, remembers her as an inquisitive student. “She would always be asking questions—they were penetrating questions,” he says. Davis was new to SDSU when Ochoa came along and he credits working on experiments with her with helping him learn about the field of Fourier optics, a discipline which ties into her interests in both electrical engineering and math. “I became an expert in this subject—and it was her thesis that started me on that,” Davis says.

Davis still uses Ochoa’s senior project in optical infor-

mation processing to teach students a key mathematical operation in physics—the Fourier transform. The project—an assembly that consists of a laser aimed through a pinhole and a set of lenses—has some new components since Ochoa and a lab partner first turned it in to Davis, but is essentially the same as when she worked on it. It now occupies a shakeproof table in a third-floor lab in SDSU’s Physics building.

Ochoa grew up in La Mesa with her mother and four brothers and sisters and graduated at the top of her class in math at Grossmont High. When she got to SDSU, she considered subjects for study over a wide range of fields, including business, journalism, computer science and music.

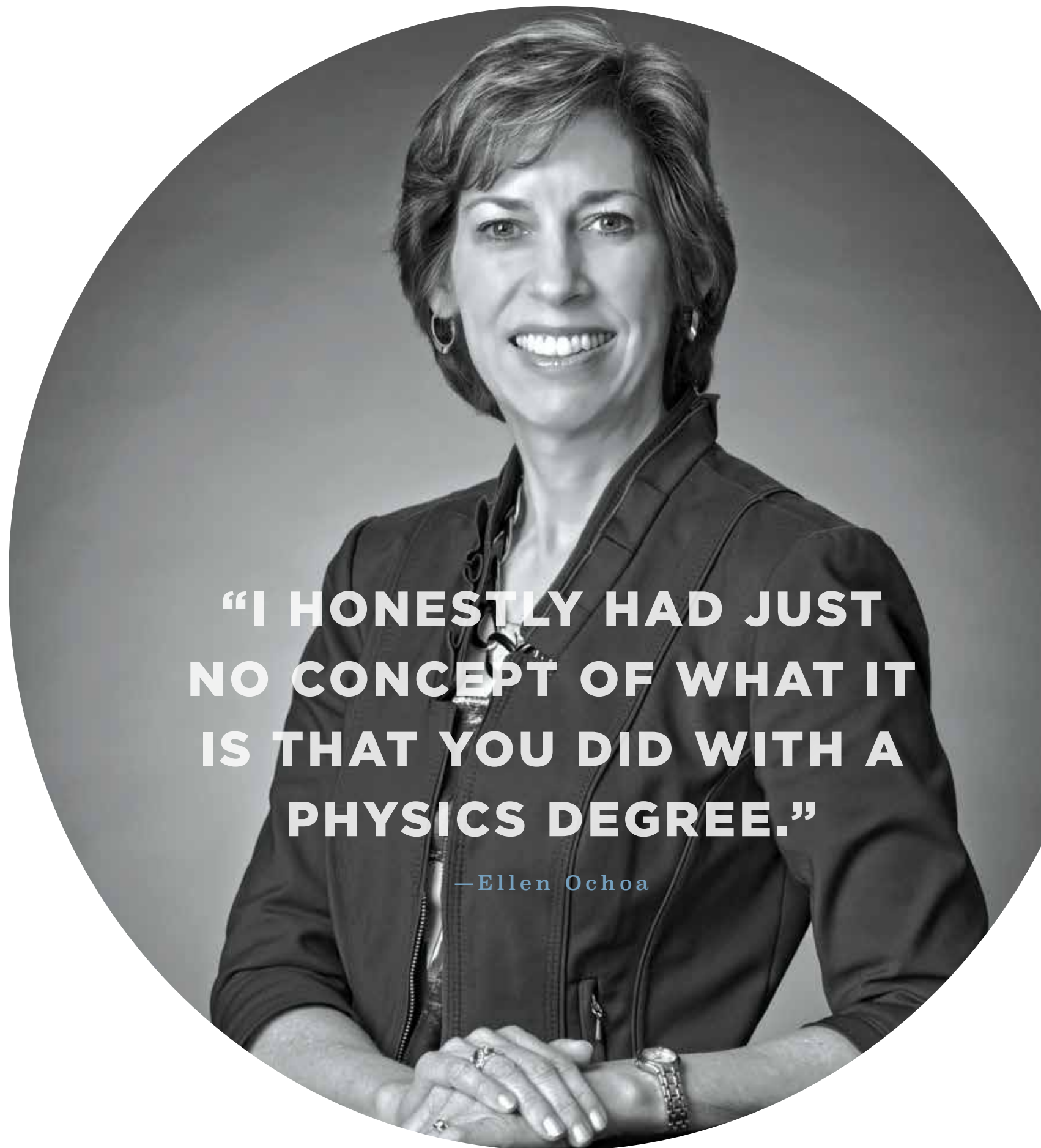
Even after picking physics, Ochoa pursued her love of music. She became an accomplished flutist, with the Music building serving as a pressure release in a schedule laden with as many as four physics classes at a time. She spent two years performing with the Marching Aztecs in football halftime shows and also played in the SDSU Wind Ensemble. One of her favorite memories is the time famed American composer Aaron Copland conducted the performers during a campus visit, Ochoa recalled in her October lecture.

Campus bulletin-board notices led Ochoa to summer jobs in labs at the University of California, San Diego, and Los Alamos National Laboratory. “Those were great introductions to research,” she said, “and I decided I wanted to go down the path of being a research engineer.”

And as for working with electronic components, Ochoa deftly operated the robotic arm of the space shuttle Discovery to deploy and recapture a satellite on her first space flight. An inspiring role model to youth as NASA’s first Latinx female astronaut, she now has six schools named for her.



Ochoa poses with her senior project in optical information processing in 1980. Right: Portrait courtesy of NASA.



“I HONESTLY HAD JUST NO CONCEPT OF WHAT IT IS THAT YOU DID WITH A PHYSICS DEGREE.”

—Ellen Ochoa

By Jeff Ristine

JOHN BALDESSARI

From National City to International Acclaim

Legendary conceptual artist John Baldessari, who died in January at age 88, helped make Los Angeles part of the global art scene, mentored many prominent contemporary artists and taught countless others. More than 1,000 exhibitions around the world have featured his work.

But before all that, the National City native studied art at what was then San Diego State College.

Baldessari's talents for art and teaching were evident even as an undergrad. He won first place in a campus poster contest and was the first student to give a talk at a fine arts gallery in Balboa Park. He even filled in to teach a class for a sick professor. Baldessari earned his bachelor's degree in 1953 and a master's degree in 1957.

He began his career as a semiabstract painter, but you won't find any of his early work.

In 1970, Baldessari took all his old paintings to a San Diego crematorium and burned them.

He documented the process and posted an affidavit about it in a local newspaper. Then he mixed the ashes into cookies and displayed them at a museum. The "Cremation Project" marked Baldessari's move into the conceptual. In a 1971 work, he famously vowed "I will not make any more boring art."

In the following decades, he became known for mixing mediums. "Artists want to communicate, to say hello to the world," Baldessari told 360 in 2009. "I tried to give people a language they could understand by combining the photos and the words."

That year he received the prestigious Golden Lion Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Venice Biennale, and a retrospective of his work opened at the Tate Modern in London. President Barack Obama presented Baldessari with the 2014 National Medal of Arts, with a citation that read: "His ambitious work combines photography, painting and text to push the boundaries of image, making him one of the most influential conceptual artists of our time."

"He brought a level of wit and humor and sort of tongue-in-cheek lightheartedness to this very serious theoretical approach to art," says Annie Buckley, director of the SDSU School of Art and Design. "And he was able to marry the two in a way that I think helped people who might not typically have an understanding of conceptual art to feel a part of it."

In addition to his own work, Baldessari is remembered for his teaching. He was a mentor to influential contemporary artists including David Salle, Jim Shaw, Meg Cranston and the late Mike Kelley. And taught many others at University of California, San Diego (1967 to 1970), the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia (1970 to 1988) and University of California, Los Angeles (1996 to 2007).

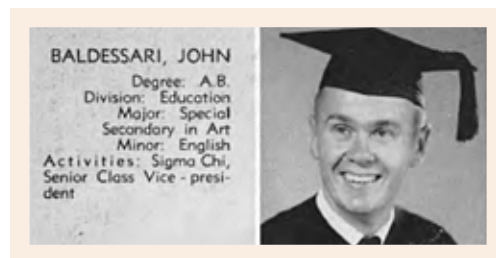
"He wasn't about trying to create Mini-Mes, he was really about helping young artists learn to trust themselves and their own vision," Buckley says.

Baldessari returned to SDSU as an artist in residence in 1987 for a two-day program of lectures, discussions and student-work critiques. "He was extremely generous with our students," says Tina Yapelli, senior curator of the SDSU Downtown Gallery. And although he was a formidable presence in the contemporary art world at that

point, he agreed to sleep on a pull-out couch in Yapelli's then one-bedroom apartment when budget didn't allow for a hotel room. "This is how rather humble he was," Yapelli says. "He put his and his student's work first and didn't put himself and his ego first."

Baldessari also lent his work for exhibitions at the SDSU Downtown Gallery in 2010 and 2013. He received an honorary doctorate of fine arts degree from SDSU in 2003.

"He has this double faceted legacy as both a maker and an educator," Yapelli says. "His impact in terms of his own work is phenomenal, but when you add to that the impact of all the artists whom he influenced by being their teacher, it's impossible to even calculate." ●



Baldessari's photo in the Del Sudoeste yearbook, 1953. Right: His 2011 portrait by Hedi Slimane, courtesy of the Estate of John Baldessari.



**“ARTISTS WANT TO
COMMUNICATE, TO SAY
HELLO TO THE WORLD.”**

—John Baldessari

By Lisa Haney

STEPHEN STRASBURG

From Santee to World Series MVP

After eight innings, the Air Force Academy hits total on the scoreboard reads: 0.

Stephen Strasburg returns to the mound for the ninth inning, the final inning he'll pitch in an Aztecs uniform at Tony Gwynn Stadium. He faces three batters: Strikeout swinging. Strikeout swinging. Strikeout looking.

Game over. Strasburg has thrown a no-hitter.

"It was electric," says SDSU head baseball coach Mark Martinez, an assistant coach during that May 8, 2009 game. "You could tell he knew it was his last time pitching on the Mesa."

The eyes of the baseball world were on Strasburg, who ended his junior season with a 13-1 record, a 1.32 earned run average, 195 strikeouts and 19 walks over 109 innings. A month after the no-hitter, he was selected first overall in the Major League Baseball draft—the first player in SDSU history to earn the distinction—by the Washington Nationals.

Fast forward 10 years to Oct. 30, 2019: The Nationals are celebrating their first World Series championship in franchise history—and it's Strasburg holding the Most Valuable Player trophy.

Strasburg had become the first MLB pitcher to go 5-0 in the postseason.

It was the potential SDSU baseball fans saw each time Strasburg took the Aztecs mound from 2007 to 2009. "When he was here, he had an unbelievable competitive spirit, a laser focus," Martinez says. "What he did in the World Series mirrored what he did here. He was dominant."

Strasburg attended West Hills High School in Santee, just a 15-minute drive northeast of campus. Despite possessing a 90+ mph fastball and promising talent, he admittedly came to SDSU undisciplined and with a poor mental game. As a freshman, he struggled in preseason workouts, many times causing more sprints for the team. But in the fall semester of his freshman year Martinez saw a new work ethic and mindset in Strasburg that continued



Strasburg pitching for the Nationals in 2019 (© Brad Mills - USA TODAY NETWORK). Right: During his Aztec years. Photo by Ernie Anderson.

throughout his junior year.

"The mental part was learned," Martinez says. "Tony Gwynn, who was head coach at the time, had a huge impact on Stephen's mental game through his mentorship. And Rusty Filter, our pitching coach then, instilled the competitiveness. He demanded it."

"We pushed him, but it was Stephen who made the decision to be great," he says.

Strasburg's drive for excellence is something his former teammates emphasize as well.

"Everyone remembers him as the consensus No. 1 draft pick and such a talent out of San Diego State that sometimes you forget that there was still a lot of room for improvement," says Erik Castro, former SDSU catcher and roommate. "He has worked really hard to get to where he's at."

As a freshman, Strasburg pitched in middle relief before being promoted to closer—giving fans glimpses of what would be. He finished the season with seven saves in 25 appearances, compiling a 2.43 earned run average with 47 strikeouts in 37 innings. As his confidence rose, so did his fastball velocity, routinely registering 100 mph.

Strasburg transitioned to the starting rotation in his sophomore year. In his seventh start for the Aztecs, he took the mound against the University of Utah, sitting down 23 Utes via

strikeout—the most in Division I since 1973—and gained national attention in the process. The following summer, he brought home a bronze medal from the 2008 Beijing Olympics, where he was the only amateur on Team USA.

Despite the expectations and hype that have surrounded Strasburg since his days donning an Aztec uniform, he has proved no stage, and no lineup, is too daunting.

Castro says, "To see him come full circle from his time at San Diego State to the World Series and grow over the last 10 years is pretty special." ●

By Ryan Schuler



"WE PUSHED HIM, BUT IT WAS STEPHEN WHO MADE THE DECISION TO BE GREAT."

—Mark Martinez

From first-generation college student to world traveler: Karen Molina's SDSU education helped change the trajectory of her life—and her family's.

WORTH

By Karen Molina ('17)

Photograph by Sandy Huffaker

THE

COMMUTE

I moved to the United States from Mexico when I was 10 with my mom and four younger siblings.

It was a huge culture shock because I was already older and didn't speak any English. And although San Diego is just across the border from Tijuana, they're two different worlds.

My mom was a single mother working minimum wage jobs, which means we struggled a lot financially during my childhood. Our family living situation was always uncertain and at one point during high school, we returned to live in Mexico, which meant crossing the border every day to get to school. It was my junior year—by far the most important year for getting into college. It was tough waking up at 3 a.m. to cross the border, get homework done and attend cross-country practice after school. But this difficult time shaped who I am and I was determined to get into college.

SDSU was my top choice and when I got in, I was really happy. I qualified for full financial aid and since I could live at home and commute, it was within my reach. I got into SDSU's EOP BEST Summer Bridge program before my freshman year. This program prepared me for my transition into college as a commuter student.

As Summer Bridge came to an end, I received a letter from Student Life & Leadership saying that I was selected to be part of the Commuter Life program in the fall. The program connected me with other commuter students through classes, volunteer work and study groups. Being part of the Commuter Life program made me feel like I belonged and helped me find my place within SDSU.

Commuting to SDSU was a big challenge as I didn't have a car. I took a combination of buses and trolleys to campus, and it was up to a two-hour commute each way. I would usually stay on campus the entire day—studying at the library, joining clubs and organizations and just trying to find ways to get involved. I also worked on campus—first in Cuicacalli dining hall my freshman year and later as a Commuter Life program mentor and tutor—to pay for my expenses

and help out at home too.

One of my goals—and why I was working so hard in college—was so that I could have a career and we'd be financially stable.

I was looking for internships my sophomore year and stumbled upon INROADS, a national program that pairs students with paid internships. I applied and got a finance internship with Chevron in the Bay Area. The company paid all my living expenses as well as a very competitive salary. The first thing I did when I got my big-girl paycheck was send money home. It was a really big accomplishment for me.

Chevron offered me another internship after my junior year and then a spot in their Finance Development Program following graduation. The 18-month program exposed me to different sectors of the company and allowed me to have a great start to my professional career as a Financial Analyst.

During my time on the program, I had assignments in the Bay Area, Lagos, Nigeria and Houston. Having a career with Chevron has allowed me to travel the world, be financially independent and accomplish many of my goals.

I was the first one to go to college, first one to move out, first one to get a real job—so it was kind of neat paving the way for my siblings and being able to help my family. I was even able to give a big chunk of money to one of my sisters to help her buy a car for her commute to college.

Currently I am living in the Los Angeles area working at the Chevron El Segundo Refinery as a Financial Analyst. It's great being financially independent and having a career that I can grow. I have disposable income to travel, save and build my life, but also to help my mom and my siblings—that's one of the biggest things that I'm thankful for. —As told to Lisa Haney



I love to travel. I studied abroad in Hong Kong during my junior year. From there, I got to travel to a lot of countries in Asia. From left: at the White Temple in Thailand; with an elephant in Thailand; at the Great Wall of China. Bottom: In Pisa, Italy in March 2019.

SDSU ALUMNI

2019 - 2020 Alumni Board of Advisors

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First President: 1931 **Vesta Muehleisen** (1907)

Visit sdsualumni.org/pastpresidents for a full list.

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Data Control Technician: **Robin Breen Rust**

Events Operations Assistant: **Armando Chavez** ('17)

Digital Communications Assistant: **Taylor De Leon**

CLASS NOTES

1980s



'84, '88 **FREDERICK W. PIERCE, IV*** (M.S. finance, MBA) is chair of the board of trustees at Franklin Pierce University, a small private university with a main campus in Rindge, New Hampshire.



'87 **TOM PEITZMAN** (B.S. telecommunications and film) was the executive producer of "The Lion King," which was nominated for an Oscar and won three Visual Effects Society Awards, including his personal win in the top category for outstanding visual effects in a photoreal feature.



'87 **LALO ALCARAZ** (B.A. art) was a finalist for the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning.



'89 **ALBERT TAN** (B.A. liberal arts) was named to the *National Law Journal's* list of Finance, Banking and Capital Markets Trailblazers. He is a partner and co-chair of the Fund Finance Practice Group at Haynes and Boone, LLP in Dallas, Texas.



'89 **HART RUSEN** (B.S. business administration) was named chief creative officer at SOCIALDEVIANT, a Chicago-based agency.

1990s



'90 **KEVIN DEBISSCHOP** (M.A. astronomy) is a research staff member at the Institute for Defense Analyses.



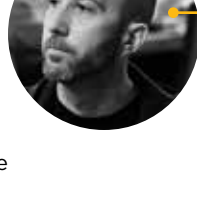
'90 **ERIC SNYDER** (B.A. geography) was elected to the Real Estate Section Executive Council of the Colorado Bar Association.



'94 **CATHERINE LAMBERT** (B.A. English) is director of contracts at Verus Research, an engineering and aerospace defense contractor in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



'97 **ROOSEVELT JOHNSON** (B.S. criminal justice administration) was San Diego Unified School District's Middle School Teacher of the Year in 2019.



'97 **HUGO CROSTHWAITE** (B.A. applied arts and sciences) won first prize in a nationwide competition by the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery in 2019.

'98, '09 **EMELYN DELA PEÑA*** (M.A. postsecondary education, Ed.D. educational leadership) was named associate vice provost for inclusion, community and integrative learning at Stanford University.

2000s

'01 **JOSH MERRIN*** (B.A. communication) produced the documentary "Inside the Edge: A Professional Blackjack Adventure."

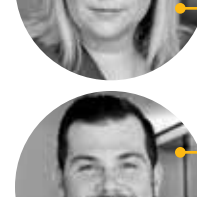
'90 **Daniel E. Walker** (B.A. psychology) received a Golden Mike Award for Best Entertainment Reporting from the Radio & Television News Association of Southern California for his work as executive producer of the TV documentary series, "How Sweet the Sound: Gospel in Los Angeles."



'03, '08 **COURTNEY GRESIK** (B.S., M.S. finance) is vice president and general manager of the Dew Tour.



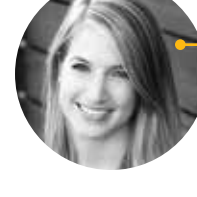
'05 **TARA R. BURD** (B.S. public administration) is counsel at business law firm Klinedinst PC in San Diego.



'05 **JENNIFER SHYDLER** (B.S. finance), a wealth management advisor at Merrill Lynch Wealth Management, was named to *Working Mother/SHOOK Research's* 2019 "Top Wealth Advisor Moms" list and to the *Forbes* "America's Top Women Wealth Advisors" list in April 2020.



'05 **VINCENT TAGLE** (B.A. journalism), a producer and videographer for WGN in Chicago, won a Chicago/Midwest Emmy in 2018-2019 and 2017-2018.



'07 **SARAH KELLY-KILGORE** (B.A. history), a partner at Greenberg Gross LLP in Los Angeles, served as lead counsel for two cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. She was named to *Daily Journal's* Top 40 Under 40 Lawyers in California in 2019 and to *L.A. Business Journal's* Top Women Attorneys in 2020.

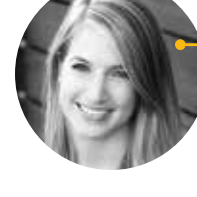


'08 **DAVIN CAREY** (B.S. finance), a senior wealth advisor at Carey and Hanna Tax and Wealth Planners in Oxnard, California, attended the invite-only *Forbes/SHOOK* Next-Gen Advisor Summit in Detroit in 2019.



'09 **SERENA PARISER** (M.A. education technology) published her second book, *Real Talk About Time Management: 35 Best Practices for Educators*.

2010s



'11 **JENI CHAMPION** (B.A. art and interior design) was promoted to associate at ID Studios in Solana Beach.



'11 **DESTIN DANIEL CRETTON** (M.A. theatre film and new media) directed and co-wrote the film "Just Mercy," which was named Outstanding Motion Picture at the NAACP Image Awards in February.



'11 **BRYAN CROWLEY** (B.S., M.S. accountancy) is vice president of finance and operations at Clearlake Capital Group, L.P. and a licensed certified public accountant in California.



'14 **KARSON BRIGHT** (B.S. criminal justice and political science) is an attorney at Howard & Howard law firm in Las Vegas.



'16 **RON SALISBURY** (MFA creative writing) is the City of San Diego's first poet laureate.

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Basketball Mania and Hardwood Legacies

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SDSU MEN'S HOOPS / BY SETH MALLIOS

NBA superstar Kawhi Leonard stood solemnly at center court, taking in the thundering standing ovation in a sold-out Viejas Arena on Feb. 1. "This is your legacy, my friend—look around this building," his former coach Steve Fisher said.

Leonard was back at Viejas, where he swished and slammed his way through two seasons in 2009 to 2011 before going pro, to witness his No. 15 jersey being retired to the rafters. The ceremony took place during halftime as the undefeated SDSU men's basketball team took on Utah State. The spectacular accomplishments of the two-time NBA champion and NBA Finals MVP—along with the historic run of this year's team—had whipped the Aztec Nation into a frenzy. Their achievements are inextricably tied to scores of student athletes who represented San Diego State for more than a century.

The men's basketball program debuted in 1910 with a disappointing start, losing nearly every game that season. Furthermore, the players suffered the indignity of playing in heavy baseball uniforms—the only functional athletic garments the fledgling institution could find at the time. Following this inauspicious beginning, basketball was suspended until 1914 and would not be officially recognized as a school sport until 1921.

A decade later, the program began making strides. Captained by future radio and TV personality Art Linkletter ('34), the men's team won the conference championship in 1932 and 1934. And basketball became the first integrated sport on the Mesa when Robert Clinton Moss, Sr. ('35) became the first African American to play on a San Diego State team.

The earliest Aztec team to make national headlines was the 1939 men's basketball team, which lost in the finals of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics championships. The 1940 team also made it to the finals, only to fall short again. Motivated by the slogan, "the third time is the charm," the 1941 team



The starting five for the 1941 men's basketball team, from left: Kenny Hale, Bill Patterson, Milton "Milky" Phelps, Harry Hodgetts and Dick Mitchell. The NAIA tournament where they earned their crown was a 32-team, five-round championship, much more grueling than the 1941 NCAA Division I tournament, which included only eight teams.

claimed the NAIA crown. Throngs of supporters greeted the victors at the downtown Santa Fe Depot and carried player Atwell Milton "Milky" Phelps ('43) on their shoulders from their train. The local community was devastated the following year when Phelps, one of the most decorated San Diego State College student athletes of all time, died in a Navy aerial training accident in Texas.

The team experienced many ups and downs during the second half of the twentieth century, but the program had bottomed out by the time Fisher was hired in 1999. The climb back to national prominence culminated with SDSU's first ever NCAA tournament win in 2011, a team that Fisher and Leonard led all the way to the Sweet Sixteen, before falling to eventual champion UConn. Since Leonard first donned an Aztecs jersey, the team has won more than 75 percent of its games, including this year's unprecedented 26-game undefeated start.

No discussion of San Diego State men's basketball is complete without acknowledgement of Michael Cage ('84), the program's career rebounding leader, or Major League Baseball Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn, who still holds the basketball team record for assists in a season. Or of the many accomplishments of the women's basketball program, which included a trio of Sweet Sixteen runs in 1984, 2011 and 2014. Likewise, the recent raising of Leonard's jersey recalls the previous honorary retirements of Phelps' #22, Cage's #44 and women's all-time leading scorer Judy Porter's #33.

All players, past and present, contributed to this year's fervor, succeeding in what former SDSU Athletic Director Fred Miller foresaw nearly four decades ago: Waking the sleeping giant that is San Diego State athletics required talent, passion and—above all—community. ●

Professor of Anthropology Seth Mallios is the university history curator and director of the South Coastal Information Center at SDSU. He is the author of 10 books, including Born a Slave, Died a Pioneer: Nathan Harrison and the Historical Archaeology of Legend.



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