

SPRING 2022

SDSU

MAGAZINE

Future Aztec

Andy Nelson, 3,
great-grandson of
SDSU's oldest living
alumna

**Celebrating
125 Years
And Beyond**

SDSU

**Class of '26
Hopeful**

Avery Laws, 18,
great-granddaughter of
SDSU's oldest living
alumna


SDSU


**Oldest Living
Alumna**


Natalie Berndes
('37), 106


SCHOOL NAMES

SCHOOL COLORS

 (1897-1921)
White and Gold

 (1921-1922)
White, Blue and Gold

 (1923-1928)
Purple and Gold

 (1928-present)
Red and Black

March 13, 1897:
San Diego Normal School Founded
California Gov. James Budd signs the legislative act formally establishing the school.

Jan. 21, 1898:
New Location Opens in University Heights
Architectural firm Hebbard and Gill designed the new building, which would eventually get wings.

Jan. 30, 1913:
First African American Student Graduates
Although she's not listed among degree recipients in the San Diego Union newspaper, Henrietta Goodwin's attendance ledger and registration record confirm her graduation.

July 28, 1921:
Name Changes to San Diego State Teachers College
The change coincides with the move from a two-year to a four-year degree and expanded teaching credentials, from exclusively elementary school to junior and senior high instruction as well.

Feb. 9, 1931:
First Classes Held on Mesa
The remote campus is surrounded by undeveloped, scrub-brush filled terrain.

Feb. 19, 1942:
Japanese American Students Internment During World War II
Fifty-seven SDSU students – including the football team's starting quarterback, George Kita – are forced to leave campus as the U.S. government relocates them to internment camps.

Oct. 14, 1947:
Alumnus Helps Break the Sound Barrier
Robert Cardenas piloted the aircraft that released the X-1 rocket plane flown by Chuck Yeager that first broke the sound barrier. Cardenas, who survived being shot down over Germany in 1944, was promoted to brigadier general in 1968.

1959:
SDSU Imperial Valley Established
The campus, in Calexico and Brawley, becomes an economic driver for the region, located near the U.S.-Mexico border.

May 29, 1964:
MLK Speaks at the Open Air Theatre
Six weeks before President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. urges all Americans to push for the passage of legislation that could help rid the nation of racial prejudice, bigotry and intolerance.

Feb. 2, 1970:
Women's Studies Program Launches
The first in the nation.

Sept. 17, 1976:
César Chávez Speaks at Montezuma Hall
He had just succeeded in getting the landmark Agricultural Labor Relations Act passed through the California state legislature.

Jan. 27, 1981:
Holly Near Performs
The famed singer-songwriter, feminist and social activist headlines a fundraiser at Montezuma Hall for the National Women's Student Association.

Nov. 15, 1998:
Women's Soccer Has Big Win
In the first NCAA Tournament game in program history, the team defeats Southern California 1-0 in triple overtime.

Oct. 16, 2009:
Parma Payne Goodall Alumni Center Opens
Longtime SDSU benefactors Leon Parma ('51), Bob Payne ('55, '12 H) and Jack Goodall ('60) contributed \$2.7 million for the facility.

2014:
Partnership to Launch SDSU Georgia Announced
A compact signed between the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Government of Georgia gives students in Tbilisi the opportunity to earn an SDSU degree.

Aug. 17, 2020:
University Breaks Ground on SDSU Mission Valley

March 14, 2022:
125th Anniversary Celebrations Begin
A birthday party and open house officially kick off 600 days of celebration.

2021:
Six-Year Graduation Rates Reach 78% for the First Time

1897 125 Years and Beyond 2022

1897:
Downtown Location Opens
The training facility for elementary school teachers opens its doors in rented rooms above a drug store on the southwest corner of Sixth and F Streets. The curriculum is limited to English, history and mathematics.

June 21, 1900:
First Commencement Held
26 students graduate.

Sept. 19, 1913:
Student Governing Body Begins Meeting
Today, Associated Students is an independent corporation that is one of the largest student governance organizations in the CSU system.

1929:
Montezuma Mesa Becomes Site for Future University
The State of California receives Mission Palisades, today's Montezuma Mesa, for the future San Diego State University campus.

Feb. 27, 1931:
Students Paint "S" on Cowles Mountain
The 400-foot letter on the highest point in the city is the largest collegiate symbol at the time and becomes a prominent tradition for half a century.

1943:
SDSU Research Foundation Established
Today, the non-profit, auxiliary organization administers thousands of active grants and contracts to further the research and community service objectives of the university.

March 25, 1949:
Aztec Becomes First African American to Participate in College Wrestling Championship
Harold Henson ('50)

1950:
All New Faculty Required to Have a Doctorate
The requirement was a first for a California state college.

June 6, 1963:
JFK Gives Historic Address
U.S. President John F. Kennedy delivers the commencement address and receives the institution's first honorary doctorate.

1967:
First Joint Doctorate Conferred
Partnering with the University of California, San Diego, the university confers its first Ph.D. – in chemistry – to Robert P. Metzger.

Feb. 8, 1974:
Aztec Becomes First Woman to Play in Division I
In a match at Pepperdine, SDSU volleyball star Laurel Brassey debuts as the first woman to play a men's Division I college sport.

Nov. 16, 1991:
University Library Adds Millionth Book
The book is a 1543 first edition of Copernicus' "On the Revolutions of Heavenly Spheres."

Nov. 23, 1996:
War Memorial Dedicated
It lists the names of 222 former SDSU students who lost their lives in service during WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, and it has continued to be updated.

Jan. 6, 2016:
Alumna Breaks Box Office Record
"Star Wars: The Force Awakens," produced by Kathleen Kennedy ('79), breaks the North American box office record, passing the \$760.5 million taken in by "Avatar."

March 16, 2020:
University Moves to Mostly Virtual Instruction Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

Jan. 26, 2020:
Men's Basketball Sets Record
Team achieves longest winning streak.

Sept. 3, 2022:
First Football Game to be Held in Snapdragon Stadium
Go Aztecs!

Nov. 18, 2017:
Aztec Football Star Makes History
Rashaad Penny amasses 429 all-purpose yards and four touchdowns running, passing and returning punts and kickoffs as the Aztecs defeat Nevada 42-23.

PRESIDENTS

 Samuel T. Block (1898-1910)

 Edward L. Hardy (1910-1935)

 Walter R. Hepner (1935-1952)

 Malcolm A. Love (1952-1971)

 Donald E. Walker (interim) (1971-1972)

 Trevor Colburn (interim) (1972-1977)

 Brage Golding (1977-1978)

 Thomas B. Day (1978-1996)

 Stephen L. Weber (1996-2011)

 Elliot Hirshman (2011-2017)

 Sally Roush (interim) (2017-2018)

 Adela de la Torre (2018-2022)

inside

ON THE COVER

SDSU alumna Natalie Berndes ('37), her great-grandson Andy and great-granddaughter Avery. Photographs by Matt Furman.

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SDSU's oldest living alumna

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Sources: "Today in San Diego State University History: 2022 Daily Calendar," by Seth Mallios, university history curator. (Montezuma Publishing); University Archives Photograph Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, San Diego State University Library

FROM THE



PRESIDENT

I HOPE THIS COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE OF SDSU MAGAZINE CONVEYS THE EXCITEMENT WE FEEL FOR A HISTORIC MOMENT AT SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY: OUR 125TH ANNIVERSARY! This expanded edition is packed with special features as we kick off more than a year of celebration and Aztec pride.

Like all anniversaries, it's a time both to look back and to plan ahead. The timeline that appears on the back of our fold-out cover is a fitting place to start, identifying many of the milestones in SDSU's evolution from a training facility for elementary school teachers — operating out of rented space downtown — to a world-class academic and research university, still expanding to serve our region, state and beyond. We've changed and grown and accomplished so much in 125 years — and what you will read in this issue are just a few of the highlights.

Research is an increasingly important part of the story of SDSU, and our eight-page centerpiece (p. 22), "The Road to R1," digs into ambitions that date back to the '60s as well as the latest Big Ideas propelling us toward a better future. Speaking of the future, catch up on the latest on SDSU Mission Valley's Snapdragon Stadium (p. 12), which will be the new home for Aztec football and fans.

Of course history unfolds at a very personal level as well. I was charmed reading the memories of our current longest living alumna Natalie Berndes (p. 20), a student from the class of '37 — when San Diego State was still so new and far removed from any other hub of activity in the community. Meanwhile, University History Curator and 125th Anniversary Advisory Board Co-Chair Seth Mallios offers his perspective (p. 14) on "What Makes This Place So Special," and invites you to share your thoughts as well.

Never forget: You are an important part of the SDSU story. I hope these stories and other highlights stir many fond recollections and keep you watching and contributing to where we go from here.

Please visit 125.sdsu.edu to find a schedule of campus events celebrating the anniversary. I hope to see you soon! ●

ADELA DE LA TORRE, PH.D.



Photographs: Sandy Huffaker (top), Matt Furman (bottom)

state lately

A LOOK INSIDE THE ARC EXPANSION

ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR CAMPUS SPOTS GOT A MAJOR UPGRADE.

An expansion of the Aztec Recreation Center (ARC) opened in fall, bringing the latest fitness trends and more capacity to meet the needs of all SDSU students.

The new space features synthetic turf for functional training, a 41-foot climbing wall and separate bouldering wall, five multipurpose studios for group fitness classes (including cycling and hot yoga) and an indoor track with sweeping views of SDSU's campus.

"Running inside the facility with that beautiful view is a new way of exercising on this campus like never before," says senior Orlando Ochoa, recreation and wellness commissioner for Associated Students (A.S.), which manages the center.

The 94,000 square foot, two-story expansion is the first phase of the ARC Expansion and Renovation project, which will bring the facility to 138,000 square feet after the second phase is complete this summer. ARC first opened in 1997 at 78,000 square feet.

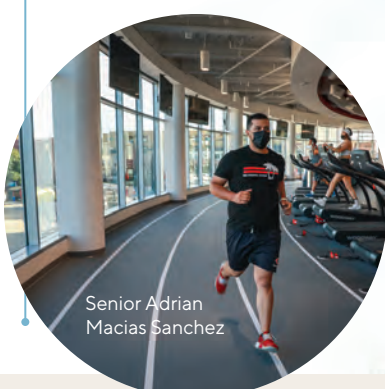
The building meets LEED Double Platinum standards with zero reliance on fossil fuels and also incorporates design

elements to support a holistic, inclusive approach to student health including wellness programming spaces, areas for adaptive sports, gender neutral locker rooms and restrooms, and social and study areas.

"I just feel this sense of joy for this next generation of students that's going to utilize and enjoy this facility," says Christopher Thomas ('18), who supported the expansion proposal in 2018 during his time as A.S. president. "They are going to have the most amazing time."

Alumni, faculty and staff may also purchase a monthly membership (\$45) or day pass (\$15) to use the facility.

—Olivia Li



Senior Adrian Macias Sanchez



AZTEC RECREATION CENTER

Photograph: Sandy Huffaker (left).



SDSU IMPERIAL VALLEY WELCOMES NEW FACULTY

Several recent faculty hires are bringing new and exciting ideas to SDSU Imperial Valley. They include:

Dominika Bukalova, assistant professor of public administration

Jeffrey Osborne, assistant professor of criminal justice

Efrén López, assistant professor of English, specializing in Chicana literature

Lluliana Alonso, assistant professor of teacher education and winner of the campus's most recent Outstanding Faculty Global Engagement Award.

"These hires signal our commitment to bring remarkable scholars to the Imperial Valley," says Interim Dean Mark Wheeler. "Doing so is part of a strategy to strengthen existing programs but also to start building new majors to benefit the region."



SDSU GEORGIA LEADS FOR WOMEN IN STEM

OF THE 287 STUDENTS currently enrolled at SDSU Georgia in Tbilisi, nearly 42% are women — the highest participation rate for women in STEM programs in the country. And 45% of the graduating class in May will be women.

"Seeing early on that there was an apparent gender inequality in STEM in Georgia, SDSU Georgia focused on encouraging women to enter the workforce in critical STEM fields," says Dean Halil Güven. "We are proud that we have almost 50% female participation in STEM degree programs."

The SDSU Georgia Associated Students Board of Directors is also predominantly comprised of women, with seven out of 10 board members, including the president and executive vice president. —Gvantsa Kheladze

286%

Increase in SDSU Microsite Degree Completion Program applicants in Spring 2022 compared to Spring 2021.



PROFESSOR EMERITUS GIVES BACK

JEROME SATTLER SAYS THE IDEA OF GIVING just wasn't part of his early life in a low-income family that was living paycheck to paycheck. As the professor emeritus of psychology became financially able throughout his career, though, he started giving back to the causes and institutions that are dear to him – including SDSU through the years. In December, he donated two significant gifts – an endowment supporting the SDSU Library and an endowed scholarship in his family's name to support the Department of Psychology in the College of Sciences. The latter supports two scholarships and a special seminar room. "I'm just very happy to be able to do this," Sattler says. "It's a way of saying thank you and giving a part of my heart to the university for everything it's given me."
—Lisa Haney



ASK A RESEARCHER KEVIN BURNS, ORNITHOLOGIST AND PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY

BURNS WAS PART OF A TEAM THAT RECENTLY IDENTIFIED A NEW BIRD – THE **INTI TANAGER** – FOUND IN BOLIVIA AND PERU.

Q: Got any advice for aspiring backyard birders?

A: Birding is for everyone, everywhere! Figuring out what's supposed to be nearby – the part of the world, the habitat you're in and when you're looking – narrows down the possible species from 10,000 to a few hundred. Observe the sounds and behaviors of birds to help you identify them: Are they perched or only on the ground? How do they beat their wings? Then pay attention to size, shape and colors.

What's the best way to figure out what birds are in the area?

There's a great app called Merlin and website AllAboutBirds.org that have been built through community science and can identify sounds, like a Shazam for birds. And I always recommend the "National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America," co-authored by an SDSU alumnus, Jon L. Dunn.

Do I need binoculars?

You'll likely identify birds first by their sound, but binoculars help you see them closer. Start by borrowing a pair or getting some that also work for sporting events – 7x35 should work well for places with plenty of light.

What's the best time of day to look for birds?

If you want to see more birds, you should look at dawn, especially for little songbirds. Hawks are more active as the day gets warmer.

Which birds are most common in San Diego in spring?

San Diego has the most diverse bird population in the U.S.; more than 500 species have been seen here, which is incredible for being outside the tropics. And 123 bird species have been seen on SDSU's campus! In spring, the Hooded Oriole and warblers will be returning from migration.

Do you have a favorite local bird?

The Wrentit. It's the only member of its family in North America with the rest of the species found in Europe, Africa and Asia. Its call is pretty distinctive, like the sound of dropping a ping pong ball.

What's the best way to attract more birds to your yard?

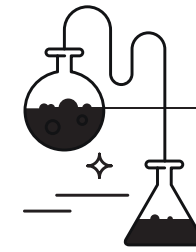
Give them some water, making sure to frequently change it to prevent mosquitoes. Provide spots for them to perch and nest in terms of shrubs and trees. I've been able to see 80 species in my one yard over the past 20 years. —Sarah White



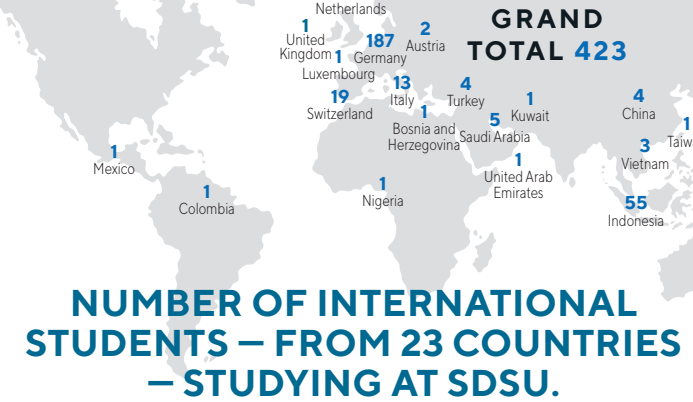
Photographs: Scott Hargrove (left), Courtesy of Kevin Burns (right and center).

state lately

/By the Numbers



\$140.6 MILLION / Grant funding SDSU researchers secured in 2020-21, maintaining the institution's research enterprise in the midst of a global pandemic.



NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS – FROM 23 COUNTRIES – STUDYING AT SDSU.

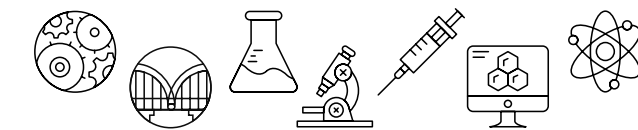
(Fall 2021 data)



76,792 / The record-breaking number of first-year undergraduate applications for fall 2022 – the highest number ever.

500,000
Number of living alumni; the university will reach the milestone in May.

60
Percentage of the university's strategic plan overall implementation that is complete after the first 18 months of the five-year plan.



7 / Latest recipients of the National Science Foundation CAREER award who will receive funding for their research: Joaquin Camacho (mechanical engineering), Christy Dykstra (environmental engineering), Youngkwang Lee (chemistry and biochemistry), Robert Luallen (biology), Arun Sethuraman (biology), Xiaofeng Xu (biology), Yong Yan (chemistry and biochemistry).

\$30,000 / NEH Humanities Chairman's Grant awarded to Gregory A. Daddis, USS Midway Chair in Modern U.S. History and director of the SDSU Center for War and Society, to collaborate on the podcast "Third Squad," about Marines who served in Afghanistan.

\$133.2 MILLION
Amount donors raised for SDSU in 2020-21.



WELCOME TO SNAPDRAGON STADIUM! YOUR SEAT IS WAITING

Photograph: Sandy Huffaker



CONSTRUCTION'S SPEEDING ALONG – AND YOU CAN ALMOST PICTURE IT NOW: It's Saturday, Sept. 3, and you arrive at SDSU Mission Valley's Snapdragon Stadium to cheer on the Aztec football team in the season home opener against the University of Arizona Wildcats. You get off the trolley at the welcoming newly renovated trolley plaza and head toward the stadium – **the silhouette of its stadium lights angled against the blue sky.**



You enter the new home for SDSU football and notice a variety of food options from local eateries: Best Pizza and Brew, Cali BBQ, The Crack Shack, Everbowl, Gaglione Brothers, The Taco Stand and more. Everything smells good. **You decide on a burger from Hodad's** and a gourmet cookie from Batch & Box. While waiting for your food, you overhear people talking about the exclusive Sycuan Founders Club, which has high-end suites, club seats and year-round access to stadium events. You hope someone you know invites you to a suite for a future game.



With your gourmet stadium eats in hand, you pass more concessions, bars, open-air box seating, and notice artistic design details celebrating the history and culture of Mission Valley and the site as you move along the open concourse that circles the stadium. As you enter the bowl, the combination of red, gray and light gray seats in the 35,000 capacity stadium creates a cool pixelated effect. **You look up and see Sycuan Piers – a triple-deck of platforms** extending over the field inspired by San Diego's coastline. You make a mental note to take in the view from the standing room at Sycuan Piers at some point during the season. Or maybe when you come to watch some of the many other teams – including San Diego Wave Fútbol Club, San Diego Legion and SDSU women's lacrosse, women's soccer and men's soccer – that will compete here too.



As you rush to your seat section, the stadium is bustling with people and you are thankful you filled out the ticket interest form on snapdragonstadium.com in March so you had early knowledge of ticket options. You finally find your seat among a crowd of Aztec football fans who are equally excited. And **as you fix your eyes upon Bashor Field, the team appears from the 50-yard line tunnel**, and the inaugural game at Snapdragon Stadium gets underway. Go Aztecs! –Michelle Barón

ALSO HAPPENING AT SDSU MISSION VALLEY

* SDSU is breaking ground on the **34-acre River Park** and **80 acres of community parks** and open space, with construction scheduled for completion in 2023.

* The first phases of the **SDSU Mission Valley Innovation District** and residential development are on track to begin construction as soon as 2023.

* SDSU researchers will work alongside partners who are focused on applying research discoveries. The initial public-private and public-public **partnerships for the Innovation District** will be announced this year.

What Makes This Place So Special

**Anniversaries
inevitably
spark
reflection.**

Legacy is a bond between past and present, and San Diego State University's vibrant heritage consists of a dynamic blend of histories, traditions and values that have been passed down for generations. At the heart of our institution is a mix of tangible and intangible qualities with special meaning in our collective memory.

So in honor of our 125th anniversary, I am spotlighting five themes that I believe are truly timeless. When taken together, I think that these legacies help to distinguish SDSU from other institutions and define our collective character, trajectories and impacts.

In addition, I am including reflections from members of the SDSU community. I also invite readers to identify their own historical legacies for San Diego State: What do you think epitomizes SDSU? Tell us at magazine@sdsu.edu for possible inclusion in an upcoming issue.

By Seth Mallios

University History Curator and Co-Chair of SDSU's
125th Anniversary Advisory Board

Photograph: Sandy Huffaker.



Our Fierce Independence



“We Rise We Defy” may be the name of the university’s current strategic plan, but the rallying cry could apply to any decade at SDSU.

Almost from the start, the institution took great pride in standing out from other schools. Our history teems with instances of opting for distinction as opposed to accepting conformity.

Our architecture is tied to early 20th century San Diego building traditions — not well-established Cal State norms — and our iconic historic core of buildings has made SDSU one of few universities on the National Register of Historic Places due to its significance and distinctiveness.

Greatly predating the California State College/University (CSC/CSU) system, we fought vigorously to ensure that “San Diego” always came first in our name and that the “CSU” (or “SU” in this case) was secondary. (This was true except for one especially contentious period from 1972-74.) “San Diego comes first” has been a regular sentiment on campus, and was especially apparent in 1960 when San Diego State College President Malcolm A. Love audaciously turned down the opportunity to serve as the inaugural chancellor of the CSC/CSU system to remain in his executive post at Montezuma Mesa.

And while in many parts of the nation, the term “State” for a college or university conveys a lesser standing, that is not the case here. As the oldest and most diverse institution of higher education in the region, and with nearly 500,000 alumni, SDSU is inseparable from the surrounding community. In fact, the relationship between university and community over the past century and a quarter has been so perpetual and interdependent, it is nearly impossible to specify where one begins and the other ends. SDSU Mission Valley in the heart of San Diego only further solidifies this bond between SDSU and the community it serves and adds to local exaltation for all things “State.”

OUR STUDENTS



“San Diego State students are genuinely unique. An SDSU student means pushing boundaries and constantly challenging the status quo to continue to innovate. Every student is a leader in their own right and has a powerful desire to continue the quest of being a lifelong learner and making the world a better place.”

—**Shawki Moore**, a junior and Associated Students vice president of external relations

Our Legacy of Women Leaders



The State Normal School of San Diego started with a cohort almost entirely of women and had no male students at the height of World War I. In addition, the first building completed on Montezuma Mesa — Scripps Cottage in 1931 — was a designated activity area and safe space specifically for women on campus that resulted from a donation from one of the nation’s leading female philanthropists at the time, Ellen Browning Scripps. SDSU also boasts many famous firsts, including the first Women’s Studies Program in the nation (spring of 1970), the first woman to play a Men’s Division I sport (Laurel Brassey in 1974), the first Latina in space and second female director of NASA’s Johnson Space Center (Ellen Ochoa, ’80), and even the greatest woman distance swimmer of all-time (Florence Chadwick, ’38).

And visits by two “First Ladies” to campus in the same year had a profound impact on the institution. Famed “First Lady of the World” Eleanor Roosevelt’s 1961 appearance and lecture at Peterson Gym led to successive visits by U.S. President John F. Kennedy (1963), Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1964), future president Ronald Reagan (1966), and many other dignitaries during the 1960s and beyond. Likewise, “First Lady of Song” and “Queen of Jazz” Ella Fitzgerald and her 1961 campus performance, also at Peterson Gym, paved the way for big-name concerts at State and has resulted in SDSU hosting more live popular music shows than virtually any other university in the nation.

OUR DIVERSITY



“SDSU’s diversity is extremely unique and one that unites the community rather than divides. We have a student body from all over the world, including those that cross the border to engage with the campus and all the perspectives that comprise the SDSU community. The diversity on campus is beyond that of ethnicity or culture, it’s diversity of thought and experience, perspectives and passions, which creates a truly distinct and precious experience that we are blessed to have.”

—**Michael Wiafe** (’20), master of public policy candidate at the University of California, Berkeley



OUR CONNECTION TO SAN DIEGO

A poem by **Ron Salisbury** (’16), inaugural poet laureate of the City of San Diego from 2020-21:

Refugee

It’s where you stand at night
in San Diego; the night in its
nightness seems different.
the body of San Diego has one arm
circling the coast, the other,
the arid east. Above, the
magic lamps of high rises,
stalagmites of modernity. The dark
is the same elsewhere with its
pin holes of light in the colander,
God’s linty pocket.

So many of us come here from the dark
elsewhere expecting the night different
and it isn’t
just warmer
Reality should never be approached
with gloved hands and a red scarf.

In this southwest pocket of the United States,
San Diego catches us who tumble down from
the elsewhere. We bunch up at the border
and San Diego plys us with sun, rinses our feet
in the bay; welcome, we hear in twelve or so tongues.

Most stay, and if not, most return

Photograph: University Archives Photograph Collection, San Diego State University Library (left).

Our Support of the Military



Today, SDSU consistently ranks as a top university for veterans by **Military Times** and one eighth of the current student body are military affiliated. But San Diego State has always been a home for the military. Whether it is the history of service by those affiliated with the institution [for example, alumnus John Marsden (attended 1948-49), served in the Spanish-American War, World War I and World War II], the on-campus memorials or the steadfast outreach to military communities, SDSU's support of the military has been consistent for more than a century. Evidence of the SDSU-military connection dot campus. Multiple permanent tributes to military alumni decorate the SDSU campus. They take many forms, ranging from tall towers (Hardy Memorial Tower) and monoliths (SDSU War Memorial) to modest plaques to an understated tree (The Freedom Tree). Collectively, they commemorate thousands of veterans with ties to San Diego State who served in WWI, WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the First Gulf War and subsequent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

World War II, in particular, had a most profound impact on San Diego State. Immediately following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government placed troops on the Montezuma Mesa campus. More than 3,500 State students, faculty and staff served in WWII, and 135 perished. San Diego State's casualty rate was far higher than the national average because so many of its soldiers were pilots, a most hazardous role during times of armed conflict.

One of the most noteworthy institutional legacies of San Diego State's wartime dedication to local service people was The Aztec News Letter, created by geography professor Lauren Post during WWII. Post, himself a WWI veteran, raised more than \$10,000 in donations to support the project and ultimately mailed out a series of 48 monthly issues to nearly 4,000 service people. This newsletter, unlike any other in the nation, was a magazine-style newspaper that successfully kept San Diego State service people aware of Montezuma Mesa events and updated the campus on the whereabouts and status of classmates who had been deployed. It evolved over the decades into the magazine you are now reading!



OUR GLOBAL REACH

"SDSU is so special because it ranks No. 1 in California for the number of students studying abroad. When I was accepted to the SDSU Weber Honors College, I was ecstatic to learn that studying abroad is a graduation requirement for the program. Having it included within my coursework provided a welcome guarantee that I'd make it on a plane! My time abroad in Cambodia and Brazil — through two fully-funded programs — provided me with the skills, confidence and drive to move abroad after graduation. I now live in Kagoshima, Japan, where I am an assistant language teacher."

—Britney Budiman ('19), assistant language teacher on the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program.



OUR SPORTS

"In many ways SDSU's tradition in sports has proved over time as rich and colorful and powerful as the Aztec Nation itself. From men's football, basketball and baseball to women's soccer, lacrosse and golf, sports have been the tie that binds decades of students, alumni and fans. If I named one iconic coach (OK, Don Coryell) or athlete (OK, Tony Gwynn) I'd have to name a hundred. Today, with a sparkling new multi-purpose stadium on the horizon, the athletic department (18 sports in all) stands on the precipice of a thrilling new chapter. As a former Aztec athlete (baseball team 1974-75) and alumnus, I could not be more proud."

—Armen Keteyian ('76), 11-time Emmy award winning sports and investigative journalist, who was most recently an executive producer of the HBO documentary "Tiger," based on his No. 1 New York Times bestselling biography, "Tiger Woods."

Our Steady Leadership

Historical legacies need not always be so serious. Over the decades, the institution has embraced light-hearted frivolity, party-school designations and sold-out student sections at athletics games amongst the daily duties of facilitating higher education.

The roots for prioritizing the extracurricular go back to President Edward L. Hardy. The institution's second president was deeply wedded to the teaching philosophy of "progressive education," which insisted that a school's primary function was to prepare students for life, not just a specific job or skill. As a result, he prioritized the development of social, artistic and athletic activities, which greatly increased the enjoyment of the students and paved the way for today's robustly diverse campus organizations.

Through the decades there have been many beloved campus traditions. In the 1930s, '40s, '50s, and '60s, for example, annual San Diego State pushball games pitted the first years against sophomores in a match that involved few rules and a giant ball 8' in diameter. The super-silly showdown regularly occurred at halftime of the homecoming football game and was determined by the group that could successfully push the enormous sphere — by whatever means necessary — past the opponent's endline.

The Show, SDSU's iconic 21st-century student section in Viejas Arena for basketball games, consists of a chaotic mix of elaborate mis-matched costumes, eccentric big-head cut-outs, and maniacal student energy. Specializing in distracting opponents while they shoot free throws, The Show grew with Coach Steve Fisher's unprecedented transformation of the men's basketball program from conference cellar dweller to national powerhouse in the 2010s. Although its members are constantly changing and its ribald Twitter account regularly crosses the line while mocking the opposition, The Show's reputation for wild antics and fun is known across the U.S. ●

Photograph: diFranco Photo (left), Archives (right).

SDSU has had remarkably consistent administrative leadership with only nine presidents in its 125-year history. In comparison, another university in the state has had eight presidents in just the last two decades. What's more, five of SDSU's presidents served at least 15 years, and none have served fewer than five. The university community was stunned when two of its presidents — President Brage Golding in 1977 and President Elliot Hirshman in 2017 — left for other jobs, as the regional expectation has long been for lead administrators to finish their careers at San Diego State. In fact, multiple presidents achieved near-mythical status by the time of their departure. Upon President Samuel T. Black's retirement, the Board of Trustees insisted that, "not once during [Black's] entire incumbency... [was] there a particle of friction among his staff of instructors or between himself and the board." President Edward L. Hardy allegedly turned down invitations to run for mayor in the 1930s. The marching band serenaded President Malcolm A. Love with "All You Need Is Love" at his farewell. And the tykes at the SDSU Children's Center were convinced that President Stephen L. Weber and his wife, Susan, were only leaving SDSU to replace Santa and Mrs. Claus at the North Pole.

Our Affinity for Fun



SDSU'S OLDEST LIVING ALUMNA

Natalie Berndes ('37), 106, has traveled the world, survived a heart attack and breast cancer and

LIVED THROUGH TWO PANDEMICS.

Now blind and partially deaf, Natalie composes poetry in her mind — including her own elegy, “Adios”— which her family has compiled into a book.

Sharp and witty, Natalie talked with SDSU Magazine in early February about

HOW CAMPUS HAS CHANGED,

memories of her sorority days, her love of teaching, her upcoming birthday and (on p. 34) the family tradition of attending San Diego State University that she inspired.

ALL THOSE YEARS AGO

By

LISA HANEY

Photograph by

MATT FURMAN

What made you want to go to what was San Diego Teachers College at the time (and then San Diego State College)?

Well, my grandparents had just built a home in Ocean Beach and I was just graduating from high school, and they wanted me to come and live with them and go to San Diego State. I grew up in Alhambra, near Los Angeles.

The campus was only a few years old then. What was it like when you arrived for the first time?

I lived a long way from the university and I was going to have to find a way to get there. So I asked around and I found a friend who had a little 1930 Chevy that was just a little matchbox with four wheels on it. So I climbed in and we were going to pick up our other passengers, and I was sitting in the back and over on the left. And when we got to our last passenger, she came out with a big smile, all of us in that little tiny car. And it was a pretty rough road because in those days the roads weren't really good, they had a lot of holes in them. And so we finally got out to State and I said, “Where are the rolling green lawns, and the ivy-covered buildings, and the statues, and the fountains?” Was nothing but San Diego State sitting out in the sticks. That's before we had the sprawling green lawns. The quad was just dirt when I was there — hadn't been landscaped yet. Well, I said, at least there's a sorority. So I was lucky enough to join Phi Sigma Nu.

What do you remember about your sorority?

We were all going out for a treat at the local ice cream place and all the girls ordered hot fudge sundaes with the chocolate dripping down, and the whipping, and the cherry. They didn't serve me anything. And so pretty soon the waitress came over with an ice cream cone with one vanilla scoop in. I said, “I didn't order that.” They all said, “Yes, you did, pledge.”

Our sorority had a table in the library, and I remember we could hardly get through a day that the librarian didn't come up and say, “You girls are disturbing the peace, you'll have to leave.”

I can still remember our sorority sisters, those young girls singing our song that was full of loyalty and all those things. They were so reverent and so dedicated, and there's such a feeling of comradeship between the girls. I can still hear them singing.

What else did you do for fun? Did you go to dances and athletic games?

Oh, I remember dancing with Frank Harriet at a fraternity dance. We had a lovely dance every Christmas at either El Cortez [Hotel] or the Hotel del Coronado. And we loved to go to the ball games. Leo Calland was the football coach then and our sorority went all together and watched the games. We loved that.

You studied in the teacher education program. What methods did you learn?

I wanted to be a teacher ever since I was a kid. I used to get all

the neighborhood kids to play school even though they'd been in school all year. So to find myself actually in a training school was a delightful experience. We used the method called integration. If we were going to teach math, we would build something and we measured each piece. I don't think they do that anymore.

Did you have a favorite teacher?

Mrs. Hammack. She was very formal and we all loved her. She kept everything smooth and nice. I remember one of my professors was a little old man. I can't remember his name, but he taught astronomy, and he'd come in with his little umbrella, and he'd open the umbrella, and then he'd take the chalk. And on the inside of the umbrella, he would draw all the constellations and all that stuff.

What else do you remember about what going to classes was like?

We had to pick out our classes before the term started, and each class had a number, and you'd get your program all fixed out. And then they would post up the numbers of the classes that were closed, and you'd look up there and all the ones you picked out were closed. That was a real ordeal. You had to pick out something else, but it might not be what you needed. Sometimes you could just go in a class and sit down and hope you'd be accepted. There were ways you could do it, but registration was hectic. Now, I think they do it all electronically.

Do you recall your commencement — and those of your family members over the years?

It was held in the gym. And I remember many, many years later, I was sitting in the same gym and watching the graduation and who walked by pleasant in his cap and gown but my grandson, Erik ['09]. [We also went to see President Kennedy speak at the 1963 commencement.] I remember we were so excited that he came because it wasn't a real big university by that time.

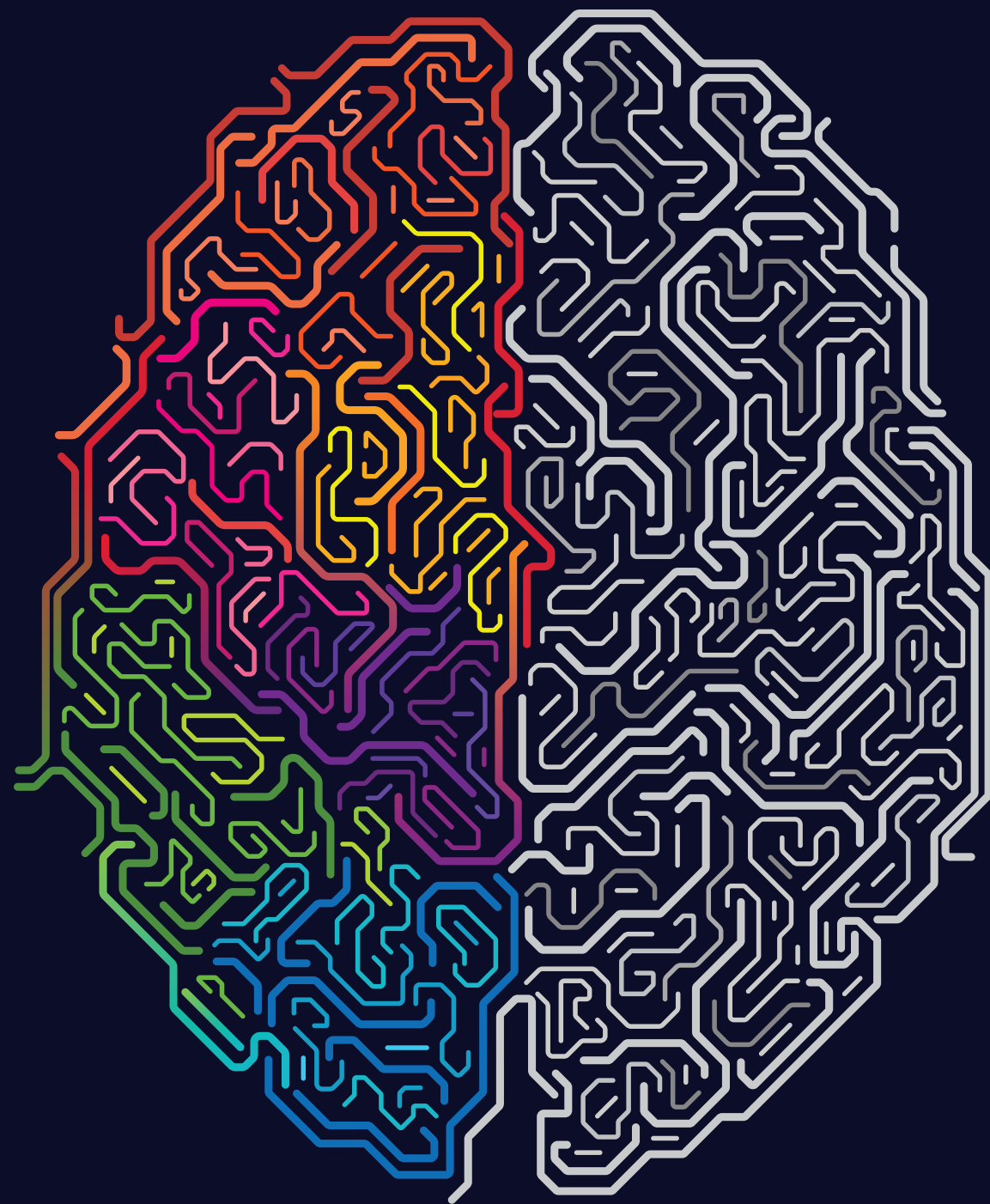
What did you do after graduation?

When I was a senior, I was engaged to be married and the sorority sisters gave me a shower, of course. I married this handsome, 6 foot 3 redhead engineer from USC and he was a seismologist with an oil company. And we moved every three months all over the United States and half of the world. But when I got back I worked for 14 years at Warren-Walker School in Point Loma.

SDSU is celebrating its 125th anniversary on March 14 and you're turning 107 on March 27. Are you looking forward to your birthday?

No. I've had all that I want! [Laughs] ●

Interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.



THE ROAD TO R1

SDSU IS MOVING TOWARD
ITS GOAL OF ACHIEVING THE HIGHEST
RESEARCH CLASSIFICATION FOR DOCTORAL
UNIVERSITIES. HERE'S A LOOK AT HOW IT
ALL GOT STARTED – FROM A GROUP OF
LEADING CHEMISTRY PROFESSORS
IN THE MID-60S TO TODAY'S
THOUGHT LEADERS.

BY KELLIE WOODHOUSE



IN A STRIP MALL OFF COLLEGE AVENUE, NEXT TO THE VONS, IS A SMALL THAI RESTAURANT.

The tables are laden with white tablecloths topped with paper sheets, the servings are generous and affordable and, in years past, one might have noticed a picture on the wall of a group of gray-haired men standing in front of the restaurant and smiling, Sala Thai's neon sign blazing behind them.

The men have been meeting at Sala Thai for nearly 30 years, religiously getting together on the first Friday of each month, derailed only by a global pandemic that requires participants — most of whom are now in their 70s and 80s — to meet over Zoom as they try to avoid exposure to COVID-19.

They are the original professors who lobbied for, and ran, San Diego State College's — and the California State University system's — first doctoral program in the mid-1960s. Many among their number have passed on, but they keep meeting each month, sharing stories and keeping the memory of their achievement alive.

What many Aztecs don't know — including a lot of the scholars who have passed through the modern-day SDSU's 23 doctoral programs — is that the university was never meant to be the research institution it has become. In fact, California's Donahoe Higher Education Act, which was adopted to the state constitution in 1960, specifically lays out that the CSU system's primary function is instructing students “in applied fields and in the professions, including the teaching profession.”

Research at CSU campuses was only “authorized to the extent that it is consistent” with that function. Meanwhile, the University of California system was appointed “the primary state-supported academic agency for research” with “sole

authority” to award doctoral degrees.

The only exception was if a UC campus chose to partner with a state college on a joint-doctoral degree. Yet even then, the state colleges were at the mercy of the UC system's discretion. The act essentially told California's state colleges to “stay in your lane,” explains University History Curator and Anthropology Professor Seth Mallios.

“Statewide, it sends the message that you are only about teaching,” Mallios says. “While it did provide a framework for partnering, it insisted that we were the weaker partner.”

Yet faculty and administrators at the San Diego campus weren't willing to be pigeonholed into a lesser role.

Around the time the Donahoe Act was moving through the state legislature, interest was building within San Diego State College to form a doctoral program. Malcolm Love, the president at the time, wanted to elevate the institution from a teachers' college to a university that was also research-minded.

And the chemistry department was a perfect test subject. The department already had a cohort of strong researchers: chemists like Ambrose Nichols, an alumnus of the Manhattan Project who had received one of San Diego State College's earliest research grants in the mid-1950s; and Arne Wick, who came to the mesa from Scripps Clinic (now known as Scripps Research) in 1958 with grant funds and an esteemed reputation in the scientific community. And its master's degree program was known to be rigorous, often taking students three or four years to complete.

The department chair in the 1960s, Hal Walba, an AAAS

fellow who led a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, also understood how participating in research was critical for faculty to remain sharp in their fields, according to many of the faculty who worked with him at the time and are now a part of the lunch crew.

“You have to have your hand in the pot stirring something in research,” says William Richardson, a chemistry professor from 1963 to 1994. “You can't be a distant philosopher. You really have to be involved.”

The country's space race with the Soviet Union at the time meant federal research funding was suddenly abundant and within reach, allowing chemistry researchers to grow their portfolios quickly, explains Edward Grubbs, a professor from 1961 to 1997. Such funding “made it [more] accessible for those of us who were not in an established big quality research institution to apply for grants and succeed,” Grubbs says.

These ambitions faced resistance and bureaucratic hurdles from state authorities and the UC system, which was reportedly not keen to lose its monopoly on doctoral degrees in the state's public higher education system, according to multiple historical accounts — including a detailed history of the chemistry department written in 1973 by Dudley H. Robinson, who started teaching there in 1928.

In addition, professors involved in the push reported some blowback from faculty who wanted the institution to remain a teaching college, and not get involved in major research.

Yet Love was undeterred. In his view, research was an essential component of the DNA of a great university. “No institution of higher learning can exist and not do research,” Love said at the time, according to Raymond Starr's book “San Diego State University: A History in Word and Image.” “Our primary aim is teaching, but research is concomitant.”

And the effort was given a boost by a major figure in history. In 1963, just months before he was assassinated, U.S. President John F. Kennedy gave the commencement address at San Diego State College and received the institution's first honorary doctorate. The visit was carefully coordinated by faculty and administrators who wanted to strike down reluctance to partner with SDSU on a doctoral degree, according to Mallios.

“There was such a built-in disincentive for universities to partner with us — unless we are the leading story on the evening news for a week,” explains Mallios. “And that's what happened with Kennedy's visit. It brought prestige, and that changed the trajectory of SDSU.”

Two years after Kennedy's visit the institution's first doctoral program was approved, and just a couple of years after that — in 1967 — the college conferred its first joint doctoral degree, in partnership with the University of California, San Diego, to chemist Robert P. Metzger, now a professor emeritus at SDSU.

“Looking back it seems a miracle that we were able to overcome all the objections and to live through all the frustrations and delays,” Robinson wrote in 1973, shortly after the upgrade

THE ROAD TO R1

to state university status.

And the university was making the case that it could be a research institution in other ways as well. By 1965, faculty had authored at least 211 books and in the fall of 1967 alone, it received \$1.2 million in federal grants, according to Starr.

“When this group of chemistry professors started the chemistry doctorate, they had to overcome a lot of challenges,” says Bill Tong, who came to SDSU as a chemistry professor in 1985 and is now the university's vice provost. “But they prevailed. They actually started the research culture here and started SDSU down the path it's on today.”

The momentum continued under President Thomas Day (1978-96), a powerful proponent of the teacher/scholar model, and by 1991 the university had eight doctoral programs. Later, President Stephen Weber (1996-2011) and President Elliot Hirshman (2011-17) continued to champion research and bolster investments in faculty scholarship.

Since then, SDSU has continued defying expectations and growing its research enterprise, while still excelling in teaching students. SDSU now runs 19 joint-doctoral programs and four professional doctoral programs (three of which are operated independently). SDSU's latest Ph.D., a joint-doctorate for Interdisciplinary Research on Substance Use, was launched in partnership with UCSD in 2015.

In 2020-21, in the midst of the pandemic, university researchers from all seven colleges brought in \$140.6 million in funding. SDSU received one of its largest-ever grants, a \$15 million, five-year award from the National Institutes of Health to bolster Latinx health disparities research and strengthen the pipeline of scientists focused on the subject. Throughout the pandemic, researchers have led more than 50 research projects aimed at tackling different aspects of COVID-19.

At the same time, SDSU has remained focused on providing a quality education for its students, including underserved students. The university is a federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution and Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution, and underrepresented minorities have a near 75% six-year graduation rate, according to university figures for

NO INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING CAN EXIST AND NOT DO RESEARCH. OUR PRIMARY AIM IS TEACHING, BUT RESEARCH IS CONCOMITANT.



Several of the chemistry professors who lobbied for, and ran, San Diego State College's first doctoral program pose outside of Sala Thai, where they gather regularly for lunch. From left: Steve Dahms, Jack Stewart, Hal Walba, Bill Tong, Ed Grubbs, Morey Ring, Ed O'Neal and Bill Richardson.



Chemistry researcher Arne Wick with Robert Metzger, first Ph.D. student at San Diego State College. Photograph: University Archives Photograph Collection, San Diego State University Library.



WE ARE AN INSTITUTION THAT IS DEVOTED TO TEACHING AND RESEARCH. WE OCCUPY THAT AMAZING SPOT ... FACULTY ARE DEDICATED TO THEIR TEACHING AND THE STUDENTS, AS WELL AS TO THEIR RESEARCH.

the cohort that entered SDSU in 2015 (the latest data available). SDSU offers a cache of programs aimed at increasing student participation in research. The Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC) program, for example, has been running at SDSU for three decades and supports underrepresented students in STEM fields through mentorships, paid research experiences and other programming.

“We are an institution that is devoted to teaching and research,” says Nancy Marlin, who served as SDSU’s provost from 1998 to 2014. “We occupy that amazing spot in California’s public higher education system. Faculty are dedicated to their teaching and the students, as well as to their research.”

Chemistry professor Christal Sohl studies how rogue enzymes lead to cancerous tumors, and also mentors student researchers and co-leads the MARC program. She notes that a lot of SDSU undergraduates are first-generation college students or minoritized groups, people who may not have considered careers in research before experiencing the process of scientific discovery in the lab.

For Sohl, research and teaching go hand-in-hand. “Research provides really valuable tools that set students up for any career they want to go into,” Sohl explains. “Day in and day out, student researchers get to practice critical thinking, working in a team and resilience. There’s a big movement in science education to have the classroom replicate the research lab and prioritize discovery-based learning. SDSU has done a great job of exemplifying that, and it wouldn’t be possible without the culture of research here.”

COLLABORATION IS KEY

When Forest Rohwer — a prolific researcher and ecologist who founded the field of viromics — thinks about what makes SDSU an exceptional research university, he lands on the university’s diverse pool of capable student researchers and its prime location in a city full of scholars open to collaborating and helping one another advance science.

“You have a lot of the things you need here,” he says. “There’s a lot of good people — great students and partner institutions. When you are in a city with so many good people around you, it really does make a difference.”

Collaboration is one of the key reasons SDSU’s research enterprise has exploded in the last decade. University researchers are increasingly working together, and with community, industry and scientific partners, to solve major problems facing the region and the world.

For example, SDSU’s Areas of Excellence initiative started in the early 2010s and focused on hiring clusters of expert faculty researchers dedicated to tackling pressing issues like climate change, smart health and human dynamics in the digital age. And the ongoing Big Ideas Initiative, with projects selected by President Adela de la Torre, brings existing researchers together on faculty-identified initiatives like curbing homelessness, leveraging comics to advance social justice and using digital platforms

to improve lung health. Both programs represent an investment by the university to prioritize collaborative research.

“We are building team science — transdisciplinary groups of people working together to provide unique solutions to sticky problems,” explains Stanley Maloy, associate vice president for research and innovation.

“It has become clear that many of the problems facing us today can’t be solved within the lens of a single discipline,” Maloy continues. “We are strategically thinking about ways to bring groups together, so that people who are thinking about common problems from different angles can build the synergies needed to solve these thorny issues.”

This is especially true with the planned innovation district at SDSU Mission Valley. With 1.6 million square feet of office, technology and research space, the district will be built to facilitate collaborations between SDSU researchers and public-private partners. It will consist of hubs where particular areas of focus — transportation, health and media, for example — are approached through a lens of transdisciplinary collaboration. Maloy uses buzzwords like “bumpability,” “convergence” and “creative collisions” to describe the desired outcome of the district: a place where transdisciplinary collaborations beget new partnerships and new ways of thinking about solutions. A site where engineers might develop a technology, and social scientists help hone it so that it’s easy for anyone to adopt, and industry and SDSU faculty work together to advance the technology from basic science all the way to commercialization.

“With successful innovation districts, place becomes essential in building opportunities to collaborate and ideate,” Maloy says. “This provides a greater opportunity for research that solves all types of problems and stands across disciplines. That’s the type of research society needs.”

Plans for the district are underway, and SDSU’s first public-private partners are expected to be announced later this year, with construction starting as early as 2023.

The university has a long history of working with the San Diego community — from SDSU’s first community-based grant led by public health researcher John Elder in the mid-1980s and focused on nutrition in the Latino community, to present day research at the South Bay Latino Research Center measuring Latino health in one of the largest studies of its kind.

These strong relationships have helped SDSU researchers

gain credibility among both community partners and funding agencies. Long-held relationships fostered by public health faculty like Elder, for example, were what allowed SDSU researchers across disciplines to pivot so quickly during the pandemic and launch the Communities Fighting COVID! (CFC) program. CFC is a major effort, supported by both local and national agencies, that facilitates contact tracing, testing and vaccination throughout San Diego. The program has also led to research insights on how best to reach vulnerable communities during a public health crisis.

“We are embedded in the community. We represent the community. We are the community,” says Hala Madanat, interim vice president for research and innovation, pointing out that roughly 245,000 SDSU alumni live in San Diego County.

“We do everything we can to pivot our research when necessary and address issues that are important to the community,” she says. “That builds trust and allows us to roll out programs at a speed others can’t because they have to forge relationships from scratch, whereas we already have them firmly in place.”

STRATEGY AT CENTER

In recent years, the university has been strategic about supporting team science with financial incentives. This has included support for research-based centers and institutes on campus, for reduced teaching loads for teams of faculty working together on important projects, and for equipment purchases that benefit research groups, as opposed to a solitary researcher.

SDSU has also made key investments in faculty. Training programs for early career faculty, for example, help them become more competitive when applying for hard-to-get grants, and robust reviewer programs greatly improve grant application success rates.

The benefits are already apparent. Since 1998, SDSU has received 26 National Science Foundation CAREER awards, a prestigious award given to highly competitive early career faculty. Yet half of them — 13 awards — have gone to early career faculty within just the last three years.

Meanwhile, SDSU is launching a program that facilitates expert review of faculty manuscripts, and has held workshops

for faculty interested in applying for funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). This effort, too, is reaping dividends. So far in 2022, faculty have received three NEH grants.

With a commitment to helping move university discoveries to the public sector where they can be further developed into products that improve people’s lives, SDSU has progressively prioritized entrepreneurship throughout recent years. Faculty receive support from programing like the Zahn Innovation Platform Launchpad, a start-up incubator for students and faculty; CSU I-CORPS, an SDSU-led workshop series that helps research teams explore biotechnology commercialization; and the university’s Pilot Innovation Fund, which offers financial support for faculty looking to commercialize their innovations.

The university had 45 intellectual property disclosures in fiscal 2021 and \$558,000 in revenue from intellectual property — figures that measure well against its peer group of research institutions, says Tommy Martindale, director of technology transfer.

A special endowment has allowed SDSU to hire its first National Academy of Sciences member, geographer and conservationist Janet Franklin. Her hire positions the geography department — which is already a major leader in creating and interpreting spatial data to analyze phenomena over time — as increasingly competitive.

As SDSU faculty become more ambitious, the entire institution benefits. “Success begets success,” says Stephen Welter, former vice president for research. “You have faculty visionaries who attract other faculty who share their vision, high standards and aspirations. And you try to leverage their successes to build state-of-the-art core facilities to help attract competitive master’s and doctoral students, such that the cycle of high performance spirals upwards.”

The strategy behind SDSU’s growing research enterprise has been strengthened and refined over time, says Michele Goetz, who has worked at the SDSU Research Foundation for 36 years, including six years as CEO. In earlier days, the ambitions of



A rendering of the SDSU Mission Valley Innovation District. Construction is on track to begin as early as 2023.

individual faculty often drove the research agenda for the university. Yet in recent decades, Goetz says, the university has put strategies and mechanisms in place to invest in research across all colleges and departments.

“It’s like the saying, ‘A rising tide lifts all boats,’” Goetz offers.

R1 A TOP GOAL

When the university unveiled SDSU’s strategic plan in 2020, strengthening the institution’s research enterprise was among the top five strategic priorities. The plan set forth the goal of becoming an R1 institution, a classification from the Carnegie Foundation that notes “very high research activity” and is reserved for the nation’s most active and well-rounded research universities.

“The university consulted with hundreds of stakeholders when coming up with the plan, and it was clear from the start that SDSU is a strong research institution whose faculty have a significant impact on society,” says Madanat. “At SDSU, research is not siloed from the larger mission of the university — which is to serve our diverse student population and impact our community. Continued excellence in research actually allows us to live by, and strengthen, these core values.”

SDSU is currently classified as an R2 doctoral university with “high research activity.” To become R1, it needs to continue strategically investing in research, encouraging doctoral programs in a wide variety of fields and supporting the research activity of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and research scholars. These are investments SDSU has made for decades, and will increasingly make in the future. SDSU’s R&D expenditures — \$108 million in 2021 — are already on par with or ahead of a number of longstanding and recently inducted R1 institutions. “We are extremely active, and we make phenomenal contributions to science and society,” says John Crockett, associate vice president for research advancement. “R1 status will come as an outcome of our continuing investments and sustained research excellence.”

For many at SDSU, the path ahead is exciting and full of potential. Faculty like Sandy Bernstein have seen the research enterprise grow and grow, despite the odds. “The can-do attitude — it’s strong here at SDSU,” he says. “It’s what makes us different. If we want to do something, we will get it done.”

Bernstein leads the university’s longest running grant, a 36-year-long National Institutes of Health-funded study of the molecular basis of muscle contraction. Yet as he retires from nearly 40 years on SDSU’s faculty, what sticks with him the most are the memories of his students over the years.

“Seeing your student learn to love science, or get a wonderful job, or get into med school — that’s the main reason we keep doing what we are doing,” Bernstein says. “I mean the research is fun too. But it’s really the interaction with the students, and seeing them succeed, that is most rewarding.” ●

CCAN: COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK



The idea: Tackling climate change, one community at a time

The objective: Draw upon interdisciplinary research at SDSU to help communities identify their specific climate challenges and explore ways to adapt. The most underserved communities are often the hardest hit. For example, homes on tribal land in eastern San Diego County are especially vulnerable because climate change has escalated the threat of wildfire and imperils rural wells. “Climate adaptation isn’t just about science,” says Megan Jennings, research ecologist and one of the team’s faculty leads. “It’s about socioeconomics. It’s about culture. It’s about arts. It’s about community action. It’s about how we interact as people. ... We have to have all these components represented or we’re not going to move the needle.”

Co-faculty leads: Rebecca Lewison, professor of biology; Doug Stow, distinguished professor emeritus of geography; Jessica Barlow, speech language professor

DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR LUNG HEALTH



The idea: Detect changes in lung function long before you have difficulty breathing

The objective: Bring together engineers, biologists, machine learning experts, public health researchers and mathematicians to develop wearable sensors that monitor pulmonary function to help detect lung diseases (such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer) and respiratory infections (such as COVID-19) early and save lives. The sensors measure muscle activity in the lungs — and the sounds they make — sending this information to health care providers in real-time. “With our approach, your lung function could be monitored continuously and alert you and your doctor at the first signs of trouble,” says faculty lead Kee Moon, professor of mechanical engineering. The researchers hope the digital platform will help alleviate health disparities by making health care more accessible to those most at risk of complications.

COMICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



The idea: Comics change the world

The objective: Harness the visual nature of comics to help people engage with complex issues — and take action. Sequential art has been exploring social justice for millennia, from ancient Egyptian paintings depicting food insecurity to recent graphic memoirs confronting racism. “We’ve heard from a lot of our students that when they engage with a topic through a graphic medium, it brings more meaning to them,” says faculty co-lead Pamela Jackson, popular culture librarian. The project will enable an expanded comics curriculum, adding a course on Native Americans in comics — among others — and eventually, a new comics major. A partnership with the new Comic-Con Museum in Balboa Park will develop public exhibitions and educational programs.

Co-faculty lead: Elizabeth Pollard, distinguished professor for teaching excellence, College of Arts and Letters.

Big Ideas Take

Flight

Solving the greatest challenges facing humanity requires visionary thinking and bold action. These six finalists in the Office of the President’s Big Ideas Initiative foster collaboration between interdisciplinary teams of researchers and community partners with the goal of making the world a better place. **By Susanne Clara Bard**

REIMAGINING TRANSBOUNDARY WATER



The idea: The water crisis doesn’t stop at the border

The objective: Connect SDSU engineers, hydrologists, geographers, social scientists and public health experts to their counterparts in Mexico to develop innovative solutions to problems that include raw sewage from Mexico entering the U.S. via the Tijuana River, sea level rise and plastic pollution. They will develop sensors for real-time monitoring of bacteria levels, map flood risks, explore the best uses for recycled water and improve water treatment technology — in order to protect life’s most vital resource for generations to come. “There are a lot of world-class research institutes in Mexico that are already doing fantastic work on water issues along the border,” says Trent Biggs, professor of geography and a faculty lead for the project. “Yet we rarely have the opportunity to put all that work together so we get a complete picture of the transboundary water problem and possible solutions.”

Co-faculty lead: Natalie Mladenov, William E. Leonhard Jr. Chair in the Department of Civil, Construction, and Environmental Engineering

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS



The idea: Housing for all

The objective: Instead of focusing on only one aspect of homelessness, identify all the key drivers of homelessness and implement proactive, evidence-based solutions. For example, an investigation of the health challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness could be more robust if it incorporated the expertise of political scientists, urban planners, economists, social workers and even artists, in addition to health experts. The big idea emphasizes constant communication around a common agenda — in partnership with government, the business community and communicators — with buy-in from people experiencing homelessness themselves. The researchers hope to inspire similar approaches across the country. “We have a belief that every human being deserves a good life ... and a better chance to reach their potential,” says faculty lead Mounah Abdel-Samad, associate professor of public administration.

AZTEC: ADVANCING ZERO-FOSSIL TECHNOLOGIES FOR ENGINEERED CARBON



The idea: Putting pollution to use

The objective: Harvest greenhouse gases from carbon-rich waste and turn it into useful products. The chemical energy from wastewater drives a reaction that converts carbon dioxide into methane. Then, bacteria that thrive on a diet of methane produce proteins in a process called microbial fermentation. These proteins can be assembled into durable, biodegradable plastics and other materials. “There’s not going to be one solution to the climate change crisis,” says Christy Dykstra, assistant professor of environmental engineering. “But we have a really unique opportunity to contribute to making a difference — everything from offsetting the use of fossil fuels, to helping mitigate the plastics crisis — to even just developing some of this fundamental knowledge that can drive other research in these areas.”

Faculty lead: Marina Kalyuzhnaya, associate professor of biology



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ODE TO PETERSON GYM

Athletics championships, historic concerts and just hanging out — the venue is the scene of memories for many alumni.



Joan Baez performs at Peterson Gym on Feb. 29, 1964.

OPENED IN 1961 AND NAMED AFTER THE GREAT C.E. PETERSON, who had an impactful 37-year tenure as SDSU athletic director, coach and alumni executive secretary, Peterson Gym is now the beloved home of SDSU women's volleyball. It's also the former home of men's and women's basketball — and of men's volleyball. In 1973, that team won an NCAA championship, with many of the tournament games played in the gym.

In the '60s and '70s, Peterson also played host to some of the most important concerts in university history, notably: Ella Fitzgerald in 1961 and Buffalo Springfield, the first big name rock show, in 1968. Bob Dylan, Ray Charles and Joan Baez all played there too.

As did countless students who snuck in through-out past decades for pick-up basketball games or just

to hang out. "People would sneak in all the time," says Mark Warner, who coached Aztec volleyball for 27 years. After daytime PE classes, students would stick cardboard in the door, so that it wouldn't lock, he says. That trick no longer works but the memories remain.

Coach Warner played in Peterson too — as a volleyball player for San Diego State and, before that, as a Crawford High School basketball player at a tournament in 1965. "Man, we thought we were at the Taj Mahal," he says, noting how rare glass backboards were at the time. That was one of his favorite wins in Peterson. The other was in 1995 when women's volleyball upset Long Beach State to go to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA tournament. "That was a special time," he says.

—Lisa Haney and Emily Wenk

why we give

...to show we're
SDSU LOYAL



Photographs: Sandy Huffaker (left), courtesy of Paul Stuverud (right).

THE DONOR: Margo Kasch
(’67, B.A., mathematics)

THE GIFT:
38 consecutive years of giving

ABOUT SDSU LOYAL: Everyone who has made a gift — in any amount, to any area of the university — in each of the last two fiscal years is recognized as SDSU Loyal. There are currently more than 6,100 members honored for their steadfast annual giving. Nearly 1,500 donors, like Margo, have given for more than 20 years in a row.

ABOUT MARGO’S SDSU CONNECTION: SDSU has been a part of Margo’s life since she was 3 years old and her father, Fred Kasch, was appointed assistant professor in the physical education department. An innovative researcher in cardiac rehabilitation and exercise physiology, Fred was also head gymnastics coach. Margo remembers attending San Diego State College basketball games at a young age and watching her father’s gymnastics team do the halftime show. Margo’s brother, also named Fred, went on to join the gymnastics team and to graduate from San Diego State with a B.S. in biology in 1963. Margo says she always knew she wanted to become a teacher. After earning her bachelor’s in mathematics at San Diego State in 1967, she earned her teaching credentials the next year and went on to teach at Patrick Henry High School.

WHY SHE WANTED TO GIVE BACK:
Margo began donating to SDSU in 1984. “I think it probably started with the student phone calls, and then eventually getting things in the mail,” Margo says. “I always respond to those.”

Giving became a habit and she has been contributing ever since, over the last three decades.

“There are many reasons that I give... but I think the most important thing for me is to help the students,” Margo says. “And giving is the right thing to do.”

She also likes carrying on her father’s legacy. The SDSU Exercise Physiology Laboratory was named in his honor in 1990 and an endowment was established in his name in 1999 to assist SDSU graduate students in the School of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences (ENS). This endowment now also honors Fred’s former colleague, Dr. John Boyer. Margo contributes to the endow-

ment and has kept in touch with some of the students it has supported, including one who is now a professor in ENS. “That’s been really rewarding,” she says.

Margo is also a member and donor to SDSU BRIDGES, which gives scholarships to students in the Weber Honors College, and she enjoys meeting the recipients every year and staying in touch as they start their careers. In addition, she has helped to fund student scholarships in the College of Education and College of Engineering, and to support students who have a financial burden due to a cancer diagnosis through the Wallace, Shatsky, Blackburn Courage Through Cancer Fund.

“It feels good to be able to give back,” she says.

“I’m proud of how much the university has grown,” Margo says. “It has done wonderful things and I’m really happy to be a part of that.” —Lisa Haney



FROM \$2 TO \$50,000

Paul Stuverud (’71 B.S., ’76 M.S., electrical engineering) first started giving to SDSU with a \$2 gift shortly after completing his master’s degree in 1976. He has since made more than 40 gifts over 45 years, most to the College of Engineering. In 2019, he made a \$50,000 gift to fund an endowed scholarship in his name that goes to a student in the Math, Engineering, Science Achievement program each year to help first generation and low-income students become engineers. As a student, Paul rode his bicycle to campus. He now belongs to three cycling clubs in San Diego.

“DEDICATED DONORS LIKE MARGO AND PAUL HELP PROVIDE SDSU STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF WITH RESOURCES THEY NEED TO PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES, DISCOVER NEW SOLUTIONS AND ACCOMPLISH THEIR DREAMS.”

—ADRIENNE VARGAS,
vice president for University Relations and Development

classnotes

AZTEC FAMILY FOR LIFE

San Diego State University's oldest living alumna **Natalie Berndes ('37), 106**, inspired a family tradition by becoming an Aztec. Three of her four children went on to attend as well: Peggy Potter ('61, attended), Barry ('69) and Jon ('71). And although son Scott went to University of California, Riverside, he is an avid SDSU sports fan. Additionally, two of Natalie's grandchildren graduated from SDSU: Peggy's daughter, Laura Potter Laws ('84), and Jon's son, Erik ('09). Now there's the possibility of a fourth generation: Natalie's great-granddaughter – Laura's daughter, Avery Laws – is a high school senior and SDSU hopeful. And the family jokes that Natalie's 3-year-old great-grandson – Scott's grandson, Andy Nelson – is a "future Aztec." Cheers to the Berndes family – and SDSU! –*Lisa Haney*



From left:
Peggy, Avery, Natalie,
Laura and Andy

Photographs: Matt Furman (left). Courtesy of families (right).

SDSU IS A TRADITION FOR THESE FAMILIES GO AZTECS!



1. The Watkins Family: Tommie ('95) and daughter Cierra ('23).



2. The Padilla Family: Gloria Celaya (SDSU mom and grandmother), Mary* ('95), Ylexia ('20), Eddie ('18), Calixta ('22) and Cesar* ('95).



3. The Castro Family: Lorilyn Lord ('98, retired in 2021 after working 23 years at the SDSU Children's Center, an Associated Students program), Chelsea ('06), Ryan ('04) and their children Russell ('20, SDSU Children's Center graduate) and Eva ('18, SDSU Children's Center graduate).



4. The Carlson Family: David ('74-76, attended), Elizabeth ('22), Robyn ('74-76, attended). Not pictured: Elizabeth's aunt, Lori Patterson ('75), and grandfather, Russell Palmer ('46).



5. The Tetley Family: Jack (high school sophomore and SDSU hopeful), Jason* ('94), Ella (first year student), Jenny* ('97).



6. The Burgreen Family (three generations of sisters): Margaret Martin (Burgreen) ('47), Betsy Burgreen ('86), Nancy Burgreen (Burgess) ('78), Loren Burgess (Nordin) ('13), Megan Burgess ('14). Not shown: Barbara Sue Martin ('50), deceased.



7. The Lima Family: Jacqueline ('22) with her "future SDSU Aztec" nieces Emma and Allison.



8. DeGuzman / Quinajon Family: Cousins Bernadette DeGuzman ('05), Christine DeGuzman ('13) and Roehla Francisco Quinajon ('96). Not shown: Roehla's son Avery Francisco (junior).

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classnotes

/Alumni Spotlight



Early in the morning of Oct. 4, 2021, **Jayanti Mathur ('05, M.S., molecular biology)** awakened as her phone notifications dinged incessantly. Research she was a part of had been cited as foundational to the 2021 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, which had just been awarded to her former mentor at the biotech company Novartis. "I literally jumped out of bed; very wide awake," she says. "It was truly an incredible day for us." A principal scientist at Novartis Institute of Biomedical Research, San Diego, Mathur had helped analyze 72 candidates to eventually identify the genes responsible for touch and temperature sensors and in which organs they are most commonly expressed. This collaborative work led to the publications cited for the prize. She says, "My ultimate dream is to see if the research that I work on turns into a drug on the market." —Sarah White



As a junior at SDSU, **Ray Berry ('63, B.A., psychology)** had a meeting with a counselor that paved the way to his success. "Why aren't you trying?" the counselor asked, and told Berry he could do better if he applied himself more. The next semester, Berry enrolled in 21 units while working full-time at local supermarkets and got his highest GPA. He learned, "Don't be afraid to fail. It is very easy to be good because most people don't try that hard." After graduating, Berry worked his way up to vice president of stores at the parent company of 7-Eleven before deciding he wanted to work for himself. With his late wife Beverly Berry ('65, education), Berry opened The Fresh Market, a boutique specialty grocery store, in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1982. The gourmet grocery store chain now has 159 locations in 22 states and was named the best supermarket in America (2021) by the USA Today 10Best Readers' Choice Awards. —Sarah White



While an undergraduate at SDSU Georgia, **Natia Inadze ('21, B.S., chemistry)** took advantage of opportunities to participate in research examining both the practical and theoretical aspects of chemical synthesis and characterization. Internships in clinical microbiology research at the Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research at NCDC Georgia, as well as with the Institute of Neuroscience and Medicine at Forschungszentrum Jülich, Germany introduced her to new aspects of natural science. "These experiences allowed me to combine my knowledge with creativity and foster independence, rigor and enthusiasm to discover something new," Inadze says. The 4.0 GPA graduate speaker is now pursuing a master's degree in biochemistry at Friedrich Schiller University Jena in Germany and plans to continue her Ph.D. studies. —Gvantsa Kheladze



Vince Hall* ('95, B.A., speech communication) was promoted to chief government relations officer at Feeding America, based in Washington, D.C., in September 2021. In the role, he works with Congress, federal agencies and the White House to help achieve the organization's vision of an America where no one is hungry. Before joining Feeding America — in July 2020 as vice president of external affairs — Hall was CEO of Feeding San Diego, a hunger-relief and food rescue organization in San Diego County and the only Feeding America network member food bank in the region. "At SDSU I received a world class education," says Hall. "I learned how to apply that knowledge to create positive change in our community through my work at Feeding San Diego, and now nationally with Feeding America." —Lisa Haney

1980s

'80 **BILL DAVIS** (B.A., marketing) retired as president and chief operating officer of Universal Orlando Resort at the end of 2021. His nearly 50-year career in adventure theme parks started at SeaWorld San Diego in 1973.

'82 **TONY TARAVELLA** (B.A., English and comparative literature), a jazz guitarist, recently released a new CD, "Dedicated to Les Paul," with 10 percent of proceeds benefiting St. Jude's Hospital.

'85 **MEREDITH GORDON** (MSW, mental health) is the co-author of "All the Love: Healing Your Heart and Finding Meaning After Pregnancy Loss," and the author of a series of ebooks on surviving narcissistic relationships.

'88 **BRIAN GUSHUE** (B.A., journalism and media studies) published his first book, "The Grass is Always Greener: One Football Fan's Improbable Quest to Attend 500 NFL Games," in December 2021.

1990s

'96 **KATHY WEYER** (B.A., psychology) released a novel, "Pages" (Heritage Art Park Series, Book 3).

'98, '09 **EMELYN DELA PEÑA*** (M.A., postsecondary education, Ed.D., educational leadership) is the newly appointed vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

2000s

'04 **EVA LOZANO** (B.A., nursing), a nurse and clinical lead in the medical intensive care unit at Sharp Memorial Hospital in Kearny Mesa, served as the honorary chair of the 2021 Homecoming celebration, representing the health care alumni who have been battling the COVID-19 pandemic.

'06 **SARAH HIBBARD*** (B.S., management), an attorney at Snell & Wilmer who counsels life sciences and technology companies from formation through growth and exit, was named one of San Diego Business Journal's 2021 Women of Influence in Life Sciences.

'08 **DAVIN CAREY** (B.S., finance), financial planning consultant for Oxnard-based Carey & Hanna Tax and Wealth Planners, has been named to the City of Thousand Oaks investment committee, where he will advise the City Council on investment decisions and serve a two-year term ending December 2023.

'09 **JAMES BRECHLIN** (B.A., psychology) has joined the San Diego office of ABI Multifamily, a leading multifamily brokerage and advisory services firm in the Western U.S., as a senior vice president.

'10 **KIM SPINARDI*** (B.S., accounting) was named partner at Hamilton Tharp LLP in Solana Beach. Spinardi plays an active role recruiting for the firm and is part of the SDSU Aztec Mentoring Program, serving as a mentor to students of all majors. She also serves on the SDSU Alumni Board and Intercollegiate Athletics Council.

SDSU ALUMNI

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*=SDSU Alumni Lifetime Member Email Class Notes to magazine@sdsu.edu.

throwback

Quiz:

TEST YOUR SDSU KNOWLEDGE

Who said it? Match the person on the right with the quote that they uttered on Montezuma Mesa. By Seth Mallios



The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, visits campus in 2012.

- 1 “Come down here and get CRAZY with me! Whoever gets on stage, gets backstage!”
- 2 “No country can possibly move ahead, no free society can possibly be sustained, unless it has an educated citizenry.”
- 3 “We must learn to live together as brothers, or we will perish as fools.”
- 4 “NASA inspires people around the world and to have been part of that has just been an amazing experience, and for me it really started at San Diego State.”
- 5 “A peaceful life brings maximum happiness.”
- 6 “Education is an inalienable right for all peoples across the globe.”
- 7 “You might as well enjoy life; God grades on a curve.”
- 8 “San Diego State University is a certainty.”
- 9 “The beauty of being a student at San Diego State is there’s a place for everyone. There really is no one identity that makes up what it is to be an SDSU student, but what brings us all together is our sense of pride, a love for the school and a constant desire to always see it made even better.”
- 10 “Honor the people who got you here, thank the people who help you succeed and surround yourself with people who keep you grounded.”

A

JIMMY BUFFETT

B

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

C

THE 14TH DALAI LAMA, TENZIN GYATSO

D

SDSU PRESIDENT ADELA DE LA TORRE

E

OZZY OSBOURNE

F

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H

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I

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J

ELLEN OCHOA ('80)

ANSWER KEY:

1/E (1995); 2/I (1963); 3/H (1964); 4/J (2021); 5/C (2012); 6/B (1961); 7/A (1975); 8/G (1969); 9/F (2021); 10/D (2019)

Professor of Anthropology Seth Mallios is the university history curator, director of the Office of University Heritage and director of the South Coastal Information Center at SDSU. He is co-chair of SDSU's 125th Anniversary Advisory Board.



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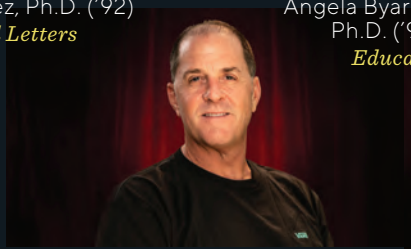
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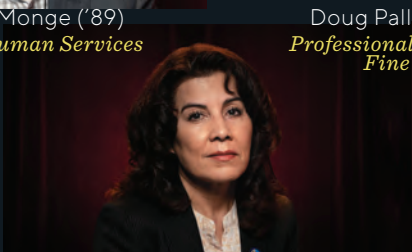
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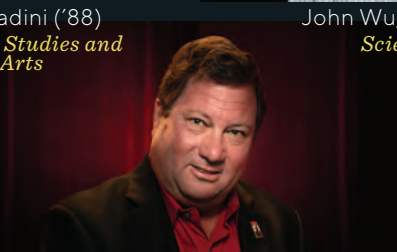
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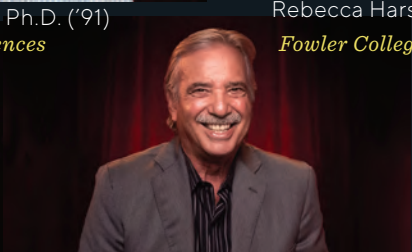
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