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The Magazine of San Diego State University

Spring 2008

Being There
Places that define the Aztec experience

7 to Watch
SDSU researchers are changing your world

Cancer Out Loud
Talking through the fears
Any university administrator will tell you that ranking colleges is a subjective business. Several times a year, I receive requests from national magazines or education councils, asking me to rank, for example, the country’s top research universities or California’s best engineering colleges.

Never mind that my judgment, and that of my fellow university presidents, has little empirical grounding; we cannot possibly know enough about these thousands of colleges to offer truly informed opinions.

But alongside these subjective rankings, there are also several objective methods of comparison. I am proud to say that many of San Diego State University’s degree programs are at the top of these empirically based national listings.

In 2007, for the second consecutive year, SDSU was named America’s number one small research university (“small” is defined as offering fewer than 15 Ph.D. degrees programs). This rank is based, not on reputation or subjective opinion, but on the scholarly productivity of faculty as measured by their publications and citations, plus the federal research grants and financial and honorary prizes they received in 2006-2007.

Academic Analytics, the group of researchers responsible for compiling this Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index, also recognized several joint SDSU doctoral programs. Speech and hearing sciences is first among similar programs; our math education and clinical psychology programs are second in their respective fields. The SDSU doctoral program in geography ranks seventh and the doctoral program in computational sciences ranks ninth.

We are also proud of our standing as number two in the nation and number one in California for students studying abroad (among public universities with high research activity). That objective ranking, based on actual numbers of students going abroad to study, is published annually in the Open Door Report released by the Institute for International Education.

[This issue of 360: The Magazine of San Diego State University features our study abroad program (on page 10) as well as profiles of faculty who have helped SDSU earn a national reputation for research excellence (on pages 16-19).]

Why are these rankings so important? Because they affirm the quality of an SDSU education and enhance our national status, enabling us to attract better students, faculty and staff. They add prestige to the SDSU degree held by hundreds of thousands of alumni in the region and across the country. Finally, they build pride in this university and its people as we pursue our commitment to teaching, research and community service.

Stephen L. Weber, president
San Diego State University
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A black hole and its companion star make unlikely bedfellows. For a black hole to be formed, a star 20 times the mass of the sun must undergo gravitational collapse. The gravitational force from the collapsed star is so intense that not even light can escape its immediate grasp, making the object invisible until swallowed gases heat up and emit X-ray radiation.

Scientific wisdom dictates that the star would either merge with the object or separate from it. But that is not the case with M33 X-7 and its companion star, and SDSU Astronomy Professor Jerome Orosz wants to know why.

Orosz leads the international team that confirmed the existence of M33 X-7, the most massive and most distant stellar black hole known. Measuring 15.7 times the size of our Sun, M33 X-7 was discovered as an X-ray source almost 25 years ago, but was only recently identified with an optical star.

The current freshman class is the brightest ever to come to SDSU, with an average high school GPA of 3.44, up from 3.16 a decade ago.

This discovery raises all sorts of questions about how such a big black hole could have formed in such a close binary system,” said SDSU’s Orosz. “M33 X-7 will be a key system in understanding both the formation of massive black holes and the evolution of massive binary stars.”

“Why are you converting your best friends to enemies?”

— Akbar Ahmed, former High Commissioner of Pakistan to Great Britain, speaking at SDSU last October
Blame Grandma

More time spent eating away from home could put kids at higher risk for obesity.

San Diego State public health researcher, Guadalupe X. Ayala, has found that consuming foods at the home of relatives, neighbors or friends once a week or more is associated with a higher risk of obesity in children.

She recommended that parents discuss their children’s health risks with friends and family members who may serve as secondary caretakers. Encourage the caretakers to reinforce at-home food rules and to negotiate what food is available to your child, she said.

Reel Story

Ibn Battuta left Morocco in 1304 C.E. for what would turn out to be almost 30 years of intrepid exploration.

He visited all of the Muslim regions of the time, including Turkey, Central Asia, China, Sub-Saharan Africa and India, covering no less than 73,000 miles before the age of steam.

Though not as renowned as his contemporary Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta did something the Venetian traveler did not – he inserted himself as a personality into the narrative. By combining his own perceptions of the Muslim world and its people with rich descriptions of the sites he visited, Ibn Battuta created one of the first modern travelogues.

Peter Aufsesser, an exercise and nutritional sciences professor, is the clinic’s founder and director. Under his leadership, its budget has grown from $20,000 in 1983 to $150,000 currently. Client fees pay for 60 percent of operating costs.

The IMAX producers like Dunn’s book, but producers of the unraveled project are borrowing from his research to make sense of the copious material contained in the “Rihla.”

Dunn has corresponded or met with the writers of both projects to review the scripts for historical accuracy. But while working with writers and producers, he has not always prevailed.

“The IMAK producers like the idea that Ibn Battuta is finding his way to Mecca using a pocket-sized astrolabe and I have serious doubts that is plausible,” Dunn said. “I may not have all the answers, but I usually know people who do.”

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The Global Perspective.
Study abroad gives students the edge.

SDSU liberal studies junior Cassie Conboy traveled to Cyprus in the summer of 2006 to learn about conflict resolution. The next summer, she studied literature in Oxford. Conboy said her experiences abroad were life-changing and taught her more about herself than she ever expected.

“It ended up being more than my finding a way to study abroad,” Conboy said. “Instead, it was studying abroad that helped me to find my way.”

In an era of economic convergence and cultural disconnect, there is no more powerful educational tool than knowledge of the world. Most universities offer study abroad programs, but San Diego State is a leader in the field.

The 2007 “Open Doors” report published by the Institute for International Education ranks SDSU first among California universities (with high research activity) for sending students abroad. Among all US universities, SDSU ranked 23rd, besting both Syracuse and Cornell.

In the 2005-06 school year alone, 1,440 SDSU students studied in more than 50 different countries. Some students spend a semester abroad; others opt for shorter, more intense programs. Alternative Spring Break South Africa is an example of the latter.

Every year, faculty from the SDSU Africana Studies department lead a study abroad program to the culturally rich nation at the foot of Africa.

Visits to townships, museums and historic locations, as well as volunteer time at schools and orphanages across Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria, expose students to the beauty and bias that coexist in South Africa.

“South Africa is a laboratory of race relations,” said Shirley Weber, chair of the Africana studies department. “The students get to see the impacts of racism and sexism — how devastating it becomes in terms of violence, economics and education — and how people deal with it in their everyday lives.”

The trip starts well before the plane takes off, with participants collecting shoes and school supplies for South African schools and attending discussions about the country’s history, culture and current problems like AIDS. Upon their return, students give presentations on campus and at various community forums about what they’ve learned through firsthand experience.

“It is hard to put a period on this experience because I believe it is ongoing,” said Jessica Heard an SDSU alumna who visited South Africa during spring break in 2006. “I will always remember what the people there taught me about hope and community.”
For the second year running, San Diego State University holds the coveted designation of number one small research university in the nation.

Top-10-ranked programs in clinical psychology, education, rehabilitation counseling and language and communicative disorders attest to the talent and productivity of SDSU’s faculty. The trickle-down effect is clear; productive faculty provide opportunities for students to participate in research and contribute to original scholarship.

Increasingly, the names of SDSU’s best and brightest students appear alongside those of their faculty mentors on publications and poster presentations.

SDSU will recognize the outstanding scholarly accomplishments of its students during the first annual Student Research Symposium on Feb. 29 and March 1 in Aztec Center.

Helping to kick off SDSU Month, undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students from all disciplines will present their research, scholarship and creative works.

Ten Presidential Awards of $500 each will be given to recognize outstanding achievement in original scholarship. The award winners will also represent SDSU at the CSU Student Research Competition in May.

Aztec Intelligence

Ron Fowler, founding chair of The Campanile Foundation (TCF), has stepped down after eight years of service. To honor his leadership, the TCF created a surprise $100,000 endowed scholarship in Fowler’s name.

As a young Mexican immigrant who spoke no English, Armando Rodriguez never really fit in at school. But the man nicknamed “Shadow” by classmates for the dark color of his skin eventually found acceptance in his adopted home. After earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education from SDSU, Rodriguez turned his greatest difference into his greatest asset.

He consummated a commitment to social reform and equality during a long career in politics and civil rights, becoming the first Hispanic to serve in several high-level government positions.

“From the Barrio to Washington: An Educator’s Journey” by Armando Rodriguez

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“The Firewood Wars” was co-winner of Fiction Network’s second national fiction competition. Several of the stories in this new collection have earned him major recognition, including the title one, for which he received a National Endowment for the Arts Literary Fellowship grant. The highly competitive grant is awarded every other year to 50 prose writers in the nation.


Luvaas explores what happens when ordinary people face extraordinary circumstances. The 14 haunting story lines test every day characters and leave the reader struggling to grasp the contemporary challenges of economic inequality, religious fanaticism and corporate greed.

“A Working Man’s Apocrypha” was a 1994 graduate of the MFA program in creative writing, who taught creative writing and literature at SDSU for 10 years. His, “The Firewood Wars” was co-winner of Fiction Network’s second national fiction competition. Several of the stories in this new collection have earned him major recognition, including the title one, for which he received a National Endowment for the Arts Literary Fellowship grant. The highly competitive grant is awarded every other year to 50 prose writers in the nation.
Healing Broken Hearts. Can science unlock the secret of the heart’s regenerative powers?

By Coleen L. Geraghty

Wounds mend, broken bones heal, but the human heart, once damaged by stroke or cardiac arrest, defies repair. Such was accepted scientific fact. Until now.

Within the last 10 years, researchers have uncovered evidence of the heart’s ability to heal itself—with a little help from friends. These revelations are enormous. Temporary fixes such as heart transplants and drug therapy may yield to non-invasive treatments that restore heart muscle damaged during cardiac arrest.

“We’ve moved from thinking that heart cell regeneration was impossible to a new realization that is revolutionizing the way we approach treating heart disease,” said Mark Sussman, a biology professor at San Diego State University and member of the SDSU Heart Institute.

In Sussman’s lab, master’s, doctoral and post-doctoral students study molecular signaling and stem cell transplantation as they relate to heart disease. Their pioneering research augurs a day when stem cells will be used to regenerate and repair damage caused by a heart attack.

Replacing lost cells

Heart disease remains the number one killer of Americans. According to the Centers for Disease Control, nearly 700,000 people in the United States die from heart disease each year, about 29 percent of all deaths recorded annually.

The causes are myriad but doctors and biologists know that a heart attack occurs when coronary arteries become blocked, cutting off the supply of oxygen-rich blood to the heart. As heart cells are traumatized, the contents of mitochondria—a cell’s energy center—leak out. So begins a downward spiral that leads to cell death.

Sussman’s team studies the biochemical signals that comprise survival signaling cascades, responsible for protecting mitochondria from damage.

Funded in part by a $9.5-million grant from the National Institutes of Health, Sussman is currently exploring how the signals work. He has discovered that Pim-1, a protein induced by injury to the heart, could be the key to regenerating heart cells and enhancing their survival.

“The heart evolved to replace cells lost from everyday activity, not to replace the massive quantity of cells lost during and after a heart attack,” Sussman said.

“By using Pim-1, we can activate stem cells in the heart and regenerate heart cells.

“Our piece of the puzzle is bringing the entire field closer to the time when we will rebuild and repair the damaged heart at a molecular level to make it as healthy as it was at a younger age.”

Making the connection

Researchers have known that bone marrow continuously expresses high levels of Pim-1 throughout life, enhancing survival and proliferation of stem cells. But Sussman’s team found that Pim-1 was also expressed in the heart during neonatal development and re-expressed in response to traumatic injury.

Based on these findings, Sussman envisions a connection between Pim-1 and the survival and regeneration of heart muscle cells. In ongoing studies conducted in the Sussman lab, researchers take stem cells from the heart and engineer them through molecular biology to express Pim-1. They implant the cells into hearts injured by a coronary blockage to simulate a heart attack.

In all cases, Pim-1 has done a remarkable job of enhancing the regeneration of heart muscle cells.

To recognize his seminal work in regenerative heart research and foster Sussman’s continued accomplishments in this exciting new field, San Diego State has named him the Albert W. Johnson Research Lecturer for 2008.

Sussman will discuss his current research at the 18th annual Albert W. Johnson University Research Lecture on March 19 from 3-4:30 p.m. in the J. Dayton Smith Recital Hall. Admission is free to members of the public. For details visit: gra.sdsu.edu/research/lectures

Lorena Ruggero contributed to this story.

At left: These photomicrograph cardiac stem cells isolated from mouse hearts clustered together in the shape of a heart.
These young researchers are changing your world

By Lauren Coartney

Climate change, heart disease, childhood obesity, barriers to education—these challenges define our world and shape our future.

The bad news is there are no simple solutions. An approach holds promise, then quickly becomes irrelevant. Researchers tackling complex global problems must be prepared to start over—and over and over—to rethink not only the solution, but even the problem.

Yet, they persist. Brilliant young researchers pursue the elusive cure for heart disease and the strategy to minimize global warming’s devastation. Some of them live and work right here in San Diego as faculty members of San Diego State University.

As leaders in their fields, they could go almost anywhere, but they choose SDSU, not only for its research excellence, but also for the opportunity to teach bright, diverse students and involve them in their Vanguard work.

Over the last 10 years, enterprising researchers from every discipline have come to SDSU to get their hands dirty looking for answers to the dynamic problems facing society today.

With impressive credentials and millions of dollars in funded research activity, they are transforming SDSU into one of the top urban research universities.

Take a long, hard look at these seven faces—these are the people who may change how we deal with the pressing health, safety and environmental issues that define our times.

Roberta Gottlieb

“‘It would be the first time we could demonstrate a cause-effect relationship between the presence of gum disease and the risk for heart disease.’

Since the advent of immunizations and antibiotics, few people in the Western world die from infectious disease—so do they? Maybe the bacteria, rather than going away, found more insidious means of infiltration.

“We’re only now beginning to recognize how bacteria contribute in much more subtle ways to chronic disease,” said Roberta Gottlieb.

A biology professor, Gottlieb came to SDSU last year to head the BioScience Center, which explores the connections between infection, inflammation and heart disease. With four grants from the National Institutes of Health, she is currently focused on two separate areas of research—finding ways to salvage heart muscle following heart attack and documenting a link between gum disease and heart disease.

Recent research on the latter topic indicates that inflammation is the body’s response to bacterial infection. Even local inflammation can cause arteries to harden.

“We’re moving toward this idea that’s it’s not necessarily specific pathogens going directly into the blood vessels and hardening them. The inflammatory response to multiple low-level infections is sufficient to create an environment leading to diabetes, obesity and heart disease.”

Sheldon Zhang

“We interview people in the underworld and the forgotten corners of the community. What we learn can help governments make better policy decisions regarding this segment of society.”

Wanted: Innovative entrepreneur with international experience and expert knowledge of interactive technology.

Not the words of a recruiter looking for a capable employee, the above describes the needs of law enforcement officials who find themselves always two steps ahead of Chinese organized crime.

Known for pulling off elaborate transnational human smuggling operations and financial crimes, such as credit card fraud and money launderings, these crafty perpetrators have long subverted justice.

“Government agencies have traditionally focused on uncovering a large, well-organized criminal entity,” said SDSU Sociology professor Sheldon Zhang. “It makes sense, intuitively, but we interview the criminals and find that most Chinese organized crime is done by enterprising agents.”

One of a handful of people specializing in transnational organized crime, Zhang does potentially dangerous work investigating criminals and observing their tactics. His research helps officials undermine criminal schemes that bilk innocent people of millions of dollars.

Michelle Dean

“Personal infection is especially important in a knowledge-based economy; it is critical to understand how psychologically based knowledge, skills and abilities relate to on-the-job success.”

You’re at 30,000 feet in a line of planes waiting to land on a runway that’s also used for takeoffs. Do you know who your air traffic controllers are? More importantly, does the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) know who they are? A mistake by one air traffic controller can kill hundreds. But colleges don’t offer this field of study, and the air space available for “practice” is hard to come by.

Management Professor Michelle Dean is helping the FAA hire smarter. The agency is faced with replacing about one-sixth of the aging air traffic control workforce as controllers hired after the 1981 strike begin to exceed the mandatory age limit.

Dean’s focus on matching the life experiences of applicants with those of demonstrably successful air traffic controllers already means her team of FAA officials know who the controllers are. More importantly, this process is helping the agency find candidates who can perform their jobs on-the-job success.”
The problem is bigger than individuals; it's environmental.

Simon Marshall

“The problem is bigger than individuals; it's environmental.

For more than 10 years, Marshall has been collecting data about the decisions made by children, parents and schools about diet and activity. He works directly with young people to find out whether vending machines and Nintendo or parental example screen potential controllers efficiently and economically.

Applied to other industries, her research could become an important tool in finding the right people for high-stakes jobs where lives are on the line.

Frank Harris III

“What's happening to discourage boys and men from taking education seriously? The unintended effect of the way we socialize boys is that they go in academics as a feminine endeavor.”

For all the attention to equality in education, educators and others charged with stewarding youth still subconsciously interact with them in ways that reinforce gender stereotypes, prioritizing athletic prowess for boys and academic achievement for girls.

He has found that the stresses of modern life - unsafe neighborhoods, rigorous academic standards and a schedule packed with extracurriculars – leave little room for the active behaviors that kept previous generations slim.

“We can all get involved in land use and urban planning decisions that impact our children's ability to walk, bike, or skate to school along safe routes.”

Karen Emmorey

“The goal is to use sign language to ask questions about the nature of language.”

Because signs like those meaning “to write” or “to hammer” resemble the action described, many people view sign language as simply elaborate mimicry.

But anyone who has ever created a poem in sign language, or struggled to remember a sign that was just on the tips of the fingers would argue it's much more.

Karen Emmorey seconds that argument. Her ongoing study of sign language identifies which elements of human language are universal, and which are particular to spoken or signed languages.

A professor of speech, language and hearing sciences, Emmorey came to SDSU in 2005 to direct the Laboratory for Language & Cognitive Neuroscience. Her work shows that sign language is not a comprehensive set of gestures, but a viable language produced and comprehended in the same areas of the brain as spoken language.

Emmorey hopes her research leads to greater endorsement of sign language in the medical community.

“Someday, I’d like to know that people are using my work to develop programs and do what they can to support healthy, productive development for men through education.”

Edward Beighley

“At the climate change, rainfall is going to change everywhere; our research can predict what flooding might look like under any given climate scenario.”

For centuries – from the Nile to New Orleans – people have thrived around flood plains, where water cycles are perennially predictable. Abrupt changes in these cycles can wipe out entire communities and result in massive loss of life. With the onset of climate change, altered rainfall patterns have begun to wreak havoc on flooding cycles.

Edward Beighley is a civil engineering professor whose hydrological modeling of the Amazon and Congo basins could restore the predictability of flood cycles and provide critical information on flood plain characteristics. His technique to model global flooding is anchored in a GIS-based, real-time monitoring and reporting system.

The change in water mass resulting from floods has the power to change the earth's gravitational signal. Using NASA satellite data, Beighley maps the volume of water throughout a basin for the entire year and compares the altered gravitational signal from this model and the GRACE satellite.

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The cancer journey often begins with a single devastating phone call. The calls rapidly multiply, not unlike cancer cells, into dozens of conversations between patients, doctors, family and friends. Each cancer diagnosis creates a web of individuals seeking hope, solace, remedy and resolution.

Inevitably, communication about cancer is charged with fear and uncertainty. Yet, communication can transform the difficult battle against cancer into a meaningful experience for cancer patients and those who make the journey with them – all of whom are cancer survivors.

Consider the story of San Diego State Communication Professor Wayne Beach. His mother was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1998.

"Once I was in that situation, I realized that the phone calls and communication with family were central to understanding and navigating through the cancer," said Beach, a conversation analyst.

His mother passed away four short months after being diagnosed. Fresh off the emotional roller coaster, Beach began working on a series of audio recordings he had received from a former graduate student whose mother had succumbed to cancer 10 years earlier.

These cassettes captured 61 phone calls between the son and his family over the 13-month course of her illness.

In the first call, the father informed his son that biopsies revealed a malignant tumor in his mother. The final call occurred just hours prior to her death, as the son updated a long-distance friend of his mother’s impending demise.

Beach recognized the value of these tapes – the first recorded history, in the social and medical sciences, of a family talking through cancer diagnosis, treatment and prognosis.

Beach’s detailed analysis of the 61 taped phone calls is to be published in a lengthy volume entitled “A Natural History of Family Cancer: Interactional Resources for Managing Illness” (Hampton Press Inc.).

"All families have to talk through (cancer) to manage their feelings."

"All families have to talk through an experience like this to understand and manage their feelings of (facing) something very scary," Beach said.

Continuing, Beach added, "It’s in the telling where the healing begins..."
Getting doctors to listen

Cancer remains the second most common cause of death in this country, exceeded only by heart disease. The American Cancer Society predicts that nearly 560,000 Americans will die of cancer this year. In San Diego alone, 200 to 300 people are diagnosed weekly.

Not surprising, then, that Beach’s work has been extended beyond family phone calls to clinical encounters. His research has been recognized by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In a new twist on cancer research, Beach is the first investigator funded by the NIH to examine the details of interactions between cancer patients and their physicians.

As Principal Investigator, Beach collaborates with researchers and doctors at the Moores Cancer Center at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). The project involves video recording interactions between new cancer patients and their oncologists to discover how patients display uncertainties, fears and hopes — and in turn, how doctors respond to patients’ concerns.

“The patients ask about eating and sleeping habits,” Beach said. “Our mission is getting doctors to hear patients and address the questions on their own merits.”

Eventually, these basic research findings can be used to design innovative educational opportunities — anchored in digitized video clips and transcriptions of “delicate” moments — for refining the communication skills of patients and their providers.

Dr. David Easter, a surgical oncologist who teaches surgeons during internship and residency, said the skill of learning to communicate with patients isn’t explicitly addressed during medical training.

“I try to get my residents to keep from looking at the chart first,” Dr. Easter said. “It gives them a new orientation. These are people, not paper. Doctors get attached to the chart first,” Dr. Easter said. “It gives them a new orientation. These are people, not paper. Doctors get attached to the chart; it keeps them from hearing what the patient is saying.”

Preliminary research by Beach and co-investigator Wayne Bardwell (UCSD) has turned up several insights into doctor-patient interaction based on the central tenants of conversation analysis.

“Gaze, gestures, touch, body position — we see things on the video that the doctors often miss,” Beach said. “When we look back at the tapes, we can point them out and make suggestions as to how to improve responses.”

He hopes to transform the research into a teaching tool that will help doctors respond to the fear, uncertainty and hope their patients express, as well as to their symptoms.

Cycle of despair and hope

Though each cancer diagnosis is different, patients seem to have similar ways of talking through the experience. Beach said close friends and relatives of a cancer patient will recognize the conversations documented in his research.

“It’s amazing because the chaos a family goes through, despite how caught up they get in it, seems to be ordered and structured,” Beach said. “Bad news is countered with good news; difficult times are balanced with hope and optimism.”

That cycle of despair and hope plays out in the 61 telephone calls Beach analyzed, and is at the core of “A Natural History of Family Cancer.”

But Beach wanted the emotional power and life affirmation of the taped exchanges to reach a larger audience.

He and Lanie Lockwood, a communications lecturer, produced a theatrical script with language from the naturally occurring conversations between family members. They involved Patricia Loughrey, an SDSU theater instructor and playwright, who was struck by the potency and authenticity of the material.

A second Loughrey script, “listen,” incorporating audience response from the “Blue Ducks” reading, was staged at SDSU’s Experimental Theatre last fall.

“There was comfort in talking about how the car battery had died.”

Beach is now working with theatre professionals in San Diego to produce a new script based on actual recorded conversations and transcriptions between family members experiencing cancer of a loved one.

He also continues to refine undergraduate and graduate curricula examining how patients, family members, and health professionals communicate about cancer.

In this way — through research, books, lectures, plays and readings — the dialogue continues. Each new diagnosis will bring another family and network of health professionals into the conversation about cancer. Wayne Beach wants them to know that they are not alone.
SDSU Month 2008

Highlighted Events

Hamlet: Blood in the Brain
March 7, 8, 12, 13, 14 & 15 at 8 p.m., March 9 & 16 at 2 p.m.

EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE

The Experimental Theatre presents Naomi Iizuka’s adaptation of “Hamlet” in which Shakespeare’s kingdom of Elsinore is relocated to the drug-ravaged world of Oakland, Calif., in the late 1980s. Iizuka’s play captures the tensions within families and between territorialized, shatled communities. For more information call (619) 594-6365 or visit www.theatre.sdsu.edu.

Kyuuro Laureate Symposium
March 13, 9:30 – 11 a.m.
MONTEZUMA HALL AT AZTEC CENTER

SDSU is proud to host the 2007 Kyoto Laureate Prize winner in Advanced Technology, Dr. Hiroo Inokuchi. His research established the academic basis for studying organic molecular electronics and contributed to the development of the field. Dr. Inokuchi works on two emerging applications: for example, SONY now uses a new flat-panel technology, called organic light-emitting diode (OLED) to produce a brilliant picture on a screen only three millimeters thick. Register for this lecture at www.kyotoprize.org.

Explore SDSU: Open House 2008
March 15, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

SDSU CAMPUS

SDSU welcomes future, current and past Aztecs to campus for an amazing day of information and entertainment. An estimated 15,000 guests will tour high-tech labs and information booths, dance to live entertainment on two stages or participate in our information fair with more than 150 interactive exhibits. Open house features a Family Zone, KPBS characters, games and fun for the whole family. Parking & admission are free.

Scholarship Challenge

The SDSU Month Scholarship Challenge is back! Through individual donations or by patronizing our partners, you can help support a future leader of industry, science, arts, education or many other fields. For more information, visit www.sdsumonth.com.

San Diego Latino Film Festival
March 14 & 15 at The Seagull. Save $3 on admission by purchasing a special ticket and get one free!

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When Ramon Ryan Tolentino remembers his years at San Diego State University, he recalls proposing marriage in the gardens of Scripps Cottage. Barbara Huntington’s memories include watching a hawk raise her young in the towering eucalyptus outside Hardy Tower. For most Aztecs, recollections of their college years conjure up images of certain places on campus. While the mind’s eye watches, a sound track replays youthful voices, chiming bells and palm fronds rustling in the breeze.

We asked SDSU alumni to tell us about their favorite places on Montezuma Mesa. Their choices and the associated memories evoke certain moments in time that will resonate with many Aztecs. If there is a common memory among SDSU alumni, it must be the delight of spending long, sunny days on a truly beautiful campus.
“Sitting in the windows of Hepner Hall, the supports brace your back and the ledges are wide enough to hold you. The breeze blows softly. You can see friends and colleagues walking by.”

Sharon Swanks, ’84

“I have fond memories of the Quad between the old library and the archway to the “main” campus. At noon, the area was lively with students. I remember, in particular, a goldfish-eating contest!”

Patricia Carone Bender, ’57

“An early memory – walking through the Quad and seeing a game of volleyball on the sand court. As a guy who loves the beach, I knew I was in the right place.”

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“The free speech steps at Aztec Center is my favorite stage for everything from political assemblies to pep rallies. I remember my fraternity performing step shows there.”

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History has a way of rewriting people's stories.

Its pen can turn eminent men into gods or monsters. Unconventional characters become eccentrics; mavericks attain hero status.

About Nate Harrison, San Diego's first African-American resident, this much is fact: he lived on a Palomar Mountain homestead in the late 19th century.

Other details have been obscured by history's lens. Was he industrious or idle? Literate or illiterate? Esteemed or ridiculed?

Lengthy accounts of Nate Harrison's life by historians, journalists and travel writers present contradictory portraits of the former slave who became a legend in his own lifetime.

The real answer is buried on Palomar Mountain, where students from San Diego State University are excavating the Harrison homestead inch by painstaking inch. During four summers of digging, they have unearthed more than 20,000 separate artifacts that date Harrison's tenure on the mountain and reveal details of a life spanning nearly a century.

Life on the mountain

Among the finds are a pre-1865 shell button; a 1916 Buffalo Nickel; dozens of deer bones, indicating that Harrison hunted and sold meat; and several tobacco pipe mouthpieces, significant because in historic images, Harrison is photographed with his pipe and attached mouthpiece.

"In the late 1860s, you proved that you had made it to the top of the mountain by having your photo taken with Nate – that's why there are so many photos of him in existence," said Jaime Lennox, a graduate student who assists SDSU Anthropology Professor Seth Mallios in running the summer field school on Palomar Mountain.

Lennox and other students brave the bugs, heat and dust for four weeks each summer to find the pieces that will complete the puzzle of Nate Harrison's life. After the dig, they clean, label and catalogue the artifacts, researching each one to determine its use as well as the place and date of manufacture.

An exotic anomaly

The archaeological process also involves poring over historical records that may reveal another dimension of the puzzle. In researching Harrison, SDSU students found written evidence of his impact on the developing San Diego landscape.

"He impacted the land directly by building a cabin, tending to livestock, planting trees," according to the Nate Harrison Historical Archaeology Project Web site compiled by Mallios and students (http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~histarch/).

"Harrison also indirectly influenced activity on the mountain by facilitating greater use of the road. He supplied travelers with water, but he also provided something much more enticing – himself. This former slave who chose to live at a great distance from the city was an exotic anomaly for the region, and he was charismatic as well."

In summer 2008, SDSU archaeology students will climb Palomar Mountain once again. It will be Jaime Lennox's fifth dig at the Harrison homestead. Despite the inevitable bugs, heat and dust, she wouldn't miss it.

"Archaeology adds another dimension to history," Lennox said. "We get to touch the past."
Sister Act. There’s magic at work when Quenese and Coco Davis share the court.

Off the basketball court, Quenese and Coco Davis could be any two friends grabbing lunch or hitting the books. Most observers would overlook a slight resemblance in the shape of their eyes and the curve of their jaws.

But when the buzzer blasts and the court erupts with sound and motion, there’s no mistaking the chemistry that transforms these sisters into a potent force on the San Diego State women’s basketball team.

Together this season for the first time as Aztecs, the Davis sisters inject a unique blend of energy and excitement into the game. Their strong sense of each other displays on the court with moves that transcend the playbook.

“They make the kinds of plays coaches don’t write, the kind that happen when two people have been playing together for a long time,” said Beth Burns, SDSU women’s basketball coach. “They love, live and talk the game. It’s their life.”

Quenese (friends call her Q) was the first of the sisters to come to Montezuma Mesa. A freshman last season, she led the Mountain West Conference (MWC) in assists. She also ranked first in assists nationally among college freshmen. This year, as point guard and co-captain of the Aztecs, Quenese is the personification of Coach Burns’ strategy.

“Q plays the fast, full-court game that is our trademark. I can give her keys to the car and let her drive,” Burns said. “She joined when the team was at the bottom. She had to trust me and believe we could turn it around.”

That the Aztec women have turned it around this season is due to no single player. Certainly a measure of the credit belongs to four young team members – freshmen Paris Johnson, Allison Duffy, Jene’ Morris and Coco Davis.

The youngest of seven Davis children, Coco is a star in her own right. A high school coach praised her “tremendous court vision,” and Burns applauds Coco’s work ethic and responsive style.

“After last year, I knew we needed a great guard,” Burns recalled. “I scouted others, but I kept coming back to Coco; she was the best. Because she works hard and asks questions, she gets better all the time.”

The Aztecs have been working hard this season to pull themselves up from a seventh place finish in the MWC last year and a ninth place finish the year before. Among the youngest teams in the MWC, they are poised to become a league powerhouse.

As Burns points out, when siblings commit to the same team, you know you’re doing something right.

—— CLoe L. Gragby
Affair of the Heart: Shileys Establish Center for Cardiovascular Research

By Nicole K. Millett

A shared appreciation of the theater and an interest in science were catalysts for Darlene and Donald Shiley's enduring relationship.

Three decades later, it is their steadfast commitment to improving the quality of life for San Diegans, and all of humanity, that moved Darlene to establish the Donald P. Shiley Center for Cardiovascular Research at SDSU. A $1.25-million leadership gift to the SDSU BioScience Center honors her husband's contributions to the field.

Donald and Darlene Shiley have worked tirelessly on behalf of the San Diego community for years, as philanthropists and dedicated civic leaders, advocates and volunteers for numerous causes. According to SDSU President Stephen L. Weber, their philanthropic savvy makes this gift all the more meaningful.

"The Shileys are astute investors, and they support innovative enterprises," Weber said. "The establishment of the Donald P. Shiley Center for Cardiovascular Research is a proud moment for San Diego State University, as it reflects Donald's commitment to entrepreneurship in the life sciences and the Shiley's shared belief in the importance of providing a strong educational foundation for future leaders in the field."

Some may say that the Shiley's love story is one of destiny or fate, since the wheels were set in motion years before they ever met.

Darlene entered San Jose State University as a biology major intent on pursuing a teaching career. Over time, she retained her interest in science but realized the field was not her true calling. Her decision to change career paths – from science to theater – led her to Donald, the love of her life. The couple met after a production of "The Lion in Winter," in which Darlene starred.

Donald was an entrepreneurial and innovative engineer whose work focused largely on biomechanical inventions. He holds several patents, including one for creating the titling disc Bjork-Shiley artificial heart valve, an invention that revolutionized heart surgery and saved an untold number of lives. Darlene's interest in science made Donald all the more intriguing to her. It was, as they say, 'a match made in heaven.'

But Darlene and Donald are not the type to ride off into the sunset. They care far too much. So, rather than resting on their laurels, the couple made it their mission to help others – through Donald's medical inventions, by enhancing understanding and building bridges in support of the arts in San Diego, and through funding groundbreaking scientific research and exemplary teaching in institutions of higher education.

"As a product of the California State University system, I'm keenly aware that San Diego State needs private support in order to produce the caliber of graduates capable of doing the kind of amazing work my husband did during his career," Darlene said. "I'm incredibly proud of him.

"Public universities simply don't have gigantic endowments to fuel innovation. They need help. Donald and I recognize that the research being done in SDSU's BioScience Center is on the cutting edge. Faculty and students are working side by side, studying how underlying factors such as infection and inflammation could identify new approaches to heart disease."

The BioScience Center brings together accomplished researchers from a variety of fields, including microbiology, cardiovascular biology, infectious disease and immunology, to work toward finding cures for heart disease.

SDSU BioScience Center Director Roberta Gottlieb, M.D., said it is an incredible honor for the center's third floor to bear the Shiley name. "Donald's development of the artificial heart valve was an innovative response to a very real need in the cardiovascular field," Gottlieb said. "The BioScience Center intends to develop creative responses just like his to address today's pressing health concerns."

The Shileys will soon celebrate 30 years of marriage. Their bond is stronger than ever, as is their love of the arts, science and San Diego.
Giving Back

Study Abroad Bolsters Hospitality and Tourism Management

Mary Sample Willette was a teenager when she met Meral Koray, a Turkish student studying in San Diego through a Rotary exchange program. The two have maintained a lifelong friendship while living on different continents.

Cultural differences have enriched their bond, and so has a common interest in hospitality and tourism. William Sample, Mary’s father, was co-founder of Atlas Hotels, which started with the Town and Country Hotel, a premier property in Mission Valley. Meral’s interest in the field arose later, when she began a career teaching hospitality and tourism management classes at Istanbul’s Bogazici University.

According to Mary, her lifelong friendship with Meral, as well as her parent’s devotion to their business, motivated her to create a legacy within the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) at San Diego State. Her significant planned gift to the university created the Willette endowment to support Hospitality and Tourism Management.

The Willette endowment will eventually provide a minimum of $60,000 annually in support of international study for HTM students and for international students interested in studying the field at SDSU. Honoring Mary’s strong connection to Meral, preference will be given to those who study abroad at Bogazici University. A portion of the funding will also support HTM faculty participation in foreign language programs and activities.

HTM Director Carl Winston said Mary’s contribution aligns perfectly with the vision of SDSU’s School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

“SDSU has one of the largest study abroad programs in the country, and we’re consistently ranked with the best,” Winston said. “Global orientation is a component of all SDSU schools and programs, especially within the tourism specialty.

“Our new emphasis in sustainable tourism requires a semester abroad. Mary’s gift will make this possible for many students, including those who couldn’t otherwise afford it. She is helping us offer invaluable hands-on experience to support our students’ personal growth, as well as their careers, and we are grateful for her vision and generosity.”

To read about other “gifts in action,” visit our online Donor Honour Roll at makingadifference.sdsu.edu. For more information about planned giving at SDSU, go to SDSUgifts.org or call 619-394-1793.

—Nicole K. Millett

Class Notes

1950s

50. **John S. Moorhouse** (mathematics; ’79, MA education), a retired manager with the U.S. Postal Service, is a member of the Condon Police Department’s senior volunteer patrol.


59. **James Sinepal** (real estate; ’79, honorary LHD) was named Entrepreneur of the Year by the Byrd School and as an Institute for Entrepreneurship. He is co-founder and CEO of Costco Wholesale Corp.

1960s

68. **Barbara Wetherbee Hightower** (kinesiology; ’81, MA education) taught for 20 years in the Lakeside Union School District. She is listed in the 2006 edition of “Who’s Who among America’s Teachers.”

69. **Edward Wright** (accounting) finished 20th in his age group in the duathlon world championship in Hungary last year. He was representing the U.S. for the seventh time in that event. Robert Svet (public administration) is chair and founder of the Eastridge Group of Staffing Companies, which is among the top 100 staffing companies nationally.

1970s

72. **Patrick Joseph Heacock** (mathematics; ’79, MA education) retired after 35 years in education. He was principal of the year in 1995 for the Moreno Valley School District. **Richard Rose** (English ’79, MA English), author of “Movable Forts and Magazines: A Novel of Vietnam,” has moved to Aztec. ** Lt. Dexter Thomas of the Ontario, Calif., Police Department was a member of the Marching Aztecs from 1976 to 1979.**

When I was at State...

The top steps of the old football stadium was my favorite spot on campus. From there, you could sit and enjoy the mighty Marching Aztecs (nearly 300 strong in the 1970s). Not only was it a place to escape the crowds, it was also the most open part of the campus. The view to the northwest was fantastic. If you were fit enough to climb a million stairs, there was often a place to park at the open end of the bowl.

Please send your news to the SDSU Alumni Association, 5300 Campanile Dr., San Diego, CA 92192-1690 or aluminfo@mail.sdsu.edu. * = annual member; ** = life member

Alumni Angles

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Alumni Angles
Dreaming Big

A little girl with big dreams has been given the chance to attend San Diego State on full scholarship.

Ten-year-old Brittnie Pemberton was part of a Salvation Army project through which homeless youngsters use disposable cameras to express their hopes for the future. Pemberton snapped a photo of the stone marker that designates the entrance to campus and added the caption—‘I hope to get a scholarship.’

Her image made the Pictures of Hope holiday card collection distributed by the Salvation Army last year, and found its way to the desk of Bill Trumpfheller, president of the SDSU Alumni Association. At Trumpfheller’s urging, the executive committee of the alumni board approved a full tuition and fee scholarship for Pemberton if she can meet admission requirements to SDSU and maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 during her attendance.

Pemberton and her mother, Tonya, got to visit the campus in December and meet SDSU President Stephen Weber, who told the youngster that if she works hard, “there will always be others working just as hard to help her achieve her dreams.”

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Dreaming Big

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The 2008 Monty Award Winners

The Montys, sponsored annually by the SDSU Alumni Association, is one of the most anticipated events on the San Diego State University calendar. This year’s gala dinner and awards presentation, honoring 11 distinguished alumni and friends of the university, is scheduled for Saturday, March 29, 2008, at the San Diego Marriott Hotel and Marina. For tickets and additional information, visit alumni.sdsu.edu/montys or contact Cheryl Trtan at 619-594-ALUM (2586) or ctrtan@mail.sdsu.edu.

College of Arts and Letters

Pam Slater-Price

Pam Slater-Price (’70 English, ’83 teaching credential) has been involved in local government for nearly two decades, serving as Encinitas councilwoman and mayor before her election to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. She has a reputation as an advocate for open-space preservation, economic growth, increased transportation spending, law enforcement, animal welfare, arts promotion and programs protecting victims of domestic violence.

College of Business Administration

Mark McMillin

Mark McMillin (’70 marketing) is co-chair and CEO of The Corky McMillin Companies, which operate in three states and include San Diego’s largest commercial developer and independent real estate firm. He serves on The Campanile Foundation Board and the President’s Leadership Fund while providing support for SDSU’s real estate program, the SDSU Alumni Association and civic, arts and educational programs throughout San Diego.

College of Education

Janet Sinegal

Janet Sinegal (’62 business administration, ’63 teaching credential) supports education and a variety of educational causes through her philanthropic work. In the past few years, her commitment has enabled scores of low income, high-achieving teaching-credential candidates to attend SDSU. Her endeavors include support for The Foundation for Early Learning, MENTOR and many other organizations focusing on the health and well-being of children.

College of Engineering

Stephen Doyle

Stephen Doyle (’80 civil engineering), president of the San Diego-Riverside division for Brookfield Homes, has served as president of both the California Building Industry and the Building Industry Association of San Diego, and is currently a member of San Diego’s Affordable Housing Task Force. He was 2007 chair of the Pacific Coast Builders Conference and is a recent inductee into the California Building Industry Foundation’s Hall of Fame.

College of Health and Human Services

Darlene Gould Davies, Professor Emerita

Darlene Gould Davies (’62 communicative sciences, ’65 communicative disorders), a professor emerita, has made important contributions to the university and the San Diego region as an educator, speech language pathologist, producer and supporter of the arts. She has served on several major committees and cultural and philanthropic boards; contributing vision, dedication, leadership and innovative thinking.

College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts

Cupcake Brown

Cupcake Brown (’78 criminal justice) is an attorney, author and motivational speaker whose personal journey from prison to parole has received worldwide attention. Her extraordinary journey from life on the streets to the New York Times best-seller list includes graduating magna cum laude from SDSU and earning a degree from one of the most prestigious law schools in California. Through her writing and public appearances, she inspires audiences around the globe.

College of Sciences

David Warner, M.D., Ph.D.

David Warner, M.D., Ph.D. (’86 physical science), is known internationally for pioneering new methods of physiologically based, human-computer interaction. He is CIO and director of medical intelligence for MindTree LLC, which solves communication, health care, education and recreation problems. He also directs the Institute for Interventional Informatics, an organization dedicated to the intelligent use of interactive information technologies in healthcare and education.

Library and Information Access

Michael John Novacek, Ph.D.

Michael John Novacek, Ph.D. (’74 biology), is senior vice president and provost of science and curator of paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History. An internationally celebrated paleontologist, he has led successful expeditions throughout the world and is well known for his authorship of more than 200 publications, including articles in the preeminent international journals Science and Nature.

Imperial Valley Campus

Miguel Rahiotis

Miguel Rahiotis (’82 psychology, ’89 counseling) is assistant dean of student affairs at SDSU’s Imperial Valley Campus, where he has been voted Outstanding Staff Member four of the last five years. His work on the Imperial County Preschool-16 Council and his outreach efforts promoting a culture of college attendance throughout the Imperial Valley have contributed to Imperial County’s statewide rank of seventh for high school graduates going directly to college.

Distinguished Alumni Service Award

James Erkenbeck

James Erkenbeck (’53 entomology, ’58 biology) is a former Aztec football player and coach, an NFL coach, and retired U.S. Marine Corps. lieutenant colonel, who now employs his leadership skills as chair of the SDSU Alumni Association’s War Memorial Committee. With his guidance, the committee recently invited representatives of the SDSU Student Veteran’s Association to join, bringing multigenerational participation to the annual War Memorial ceremony.

Distinguished University Service Award

Jeff Glazer

Jeff Glazer (’81 MBA), a full-time lecturer in the College of Business Administration, is in his second term with The Campanile Foundation. A past member of the President’s Council and the College of Business Advisory Board, he also served a six-year term on the SDSU Alumni Association Board of Directors. In that role, he was a member of the executive committee and actively involved in the Alumni Center Campaign.
Jake Falzone
Hometown: Newbury Park, California
Career ambition: music industry executive

As a resident adviser at Chapultepec, you got good reviews for the drug and substance awareness program you developed for residents this year. Yes, another R.A., Alyssa Root, and I decided to get creative. We asked students to fill out an anonymous survey about tobacco, drug, alcohol and substance abuse. Then we showed them a PowerPoint based on their answers. We didn’t want to point fingers and say, “don’t do this.” We wanted to give them information so they would understand the consequences of their actions.

Some people call SDSU a “party school.” What’s your take on that? I think that reputation is unfair. Yes, the environment here is very social, but that’s not bad. What I love about SDSU is that I’m constantly meeting new people. In the residence halls, I try to create a friendly atmosphere that brings out the best in everyone.

What’s your favorite place on campus? I really enjoy the campus as a whole. One of the best parts of my day is plugging into my iPod and walking to class, enjoying the scenery this place has to offer. I fell in love with the campus the first time I saw it, and that was a key reason I chose State. I want the place I live to be a place I enjoy seeing every day.

What do you want to do after graduation? Music defines me. I want to work in the music industry, but I’m more of a behind-the-scenes guy. I’d love to be in a position to steer the industry in a certain direction like Bono and Al Gore, who mix humanitarian ideas with music and make big things happen. I want to use music to bring harmony and peace to the world.