

Heart to Heart:UC San Diego Donors and Students Celebrate Gift of Education

At Feb. 12 Hearts and Scholars dinner, scholarship recipients personally thank their benefactors

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Jade Griffin

Kenyon Ralph, a student at the University of California, San Diego, served in the Marine Corps Reserve for seven years and was twice deployed to Iraq. While in the military, Ralph attended several community colleges before transferring to UC San Diego, where he was thrilled to receive the *Pat and Bob Whalen Endowed Military Transfer Scholarship*, established through the generosity of longtime university friends and La Jolla residents, Pat and Bob Whalen.

While Ralph received some assistance from the U.S. government for his education, as a reserve troop member, the Montgomery GI Bill provided less than it would have for active duty personnel. The Whalen scholarship has made a great difference to the Computer Engineering major.

"The scholarship has considerably reduced my reliance on student loans and has allowed me to focus more on my schoolwork," said Ralph, who like many military veterans has been self-reliant for several years, and has had very different experiences than students entering college directly from high school.

Ralph will have the opportunity to express his gratitude to his benefactors Feb. 12 at UC San Diego's annual Hearts and Scholars dinner, which pairs undergraduate scholarship recipients with the donors who made their scholarships possible.

"Scholarships are important-many of us join the military to help with our schooling, but the government's funding may prove inadequate to cover tuition and living expenses," said Ralph. "The Whalen scholarship allows students, like me, to attend UC San Diego without having to worry so much about finances, so that we can be more academically competitive."

The Whalens understand how difficult it can be to cover living expenses while attending a university. After earning his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn in 1954, Bob Whalen moved with his family to the West Coast to pursue his graduate degree. While studying at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, Bob had to make a difficult decision. Faced with a \$62 bill for maintenance on the family car, he decided that he needed to leave school to get a job.

"We had no other way of paying," Pat added. "When we needed new tires and brakes for our 1938 Plymouth, Bob had no other choice. He was hired to his first job by Bell Aircraft in Buffalo, without ever finishing his graduate degree."

Bob went on to become president of operations for the Martin Marietta Orlando Aerospace Corporation, which later merged to become Lockheed Martin. Pat studied to become one of central Florida's first female general contractors.

Never forgetting the role that education played in their success, the couple has devoted much of their time and charitable giving to student support. In addition to establishing the endowment to help students who have served in the armed forces, the Whalens have given to undergraduate scholarships at UC San Diego for more than a decade. Pat has also served on the UC San Diego Undergraduate Scholarship Council for 12 years.

"Our military has given so much to this country, and because of this we felt we needed to give back to them," said Pat. "We hope this funding helps ease the strain of educational costs. We are aware that undergraduate scholars have a very tough time-tuition and living expenses are ever increasing. Yet education is the basic foundation of a strong, healthy society."

Already an asset to UC San Diego and its student population, Ralph has spearheaded efforts to help future generations of student veterans. Last year, he co-founded the Student Veteran Organization, which provides an opportunity for veteran students to socialize with one another and helps incoming students find their niche on campus. The group is also working with administrators to implement a more streamlined application and registration process for veteran students. These accommodations are especially important since increases are anticipated in the number of enrolled students who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

After graduating with his Bachelor's degree in 2010, Ralph hopes to earn a graduate degree before getting a job in the engineering industry-goals very reminiscent of a young Bob Whalen.

To learn more about undergraduate scholarships at UC San Diego, please [click here](#).

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