

UC San Diego VIP Tour Guide Reflects as Campus Approaches Half Century Mark

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After nearly 40 years as an employee at the University of California, San Diego, Bob Starkey has had the unique opportunity to watch UC San Diego grow to become the powerhouse that it is today. Since retiring as a campus planning analytical studies officer, he has also been able to tap into this extensive knowledge of the university by providing campus tours as a VIP Tour Guide.

Free guided, 90-minute walking and bus tours have been a campus signature for years. The tour guides, carefully selected for their broad university knowledge and connection with the school, are primarily former UC San Diego employees, such as Starkey, who enjoy the opportunity to showcase the picturesque 1,200 acre campus to visitors, in addition to sharing their own memories, stories and a few laughs.

"As a university, we're incredibly unique," Starkey says. "We originally started out as a science and engineering graduate school for Ph.D. candidates before the thought of undergraduate programs came about. By the time the campus enrolled the first undergraduates in the fall of 1964, over 300 graduate students were already attending the school. And many of the first faculty members recruited were from well-established, prestigious educational institutions."

This year, as the university approaches a significant milestone - its 50th Anniversary celebration, set to begin this fall - the achievements of the school are apparent. UC San Diego is ranked 7th best public university in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report* and second in the nation for its positive impact on the region, state and country. Starkey is quick to explain the phenomenon of a young school that has so rapidly achieved such a distinguished national reputation.

"The quality foundation that was laid fifty years ago has had a domino effect in allowing us to attract a very intelligent and hard-working student body," he explains.

Starkey is incredibly passionate about the university and his role in sharing its impressive accomplishments with the community. In addition to jumping at the chance to explain all things connected with UC San Diego, he boasts about being on campus practically every day. "It's a strong community here," he notes. "The chancellors are a prime example. Many have never left the campus and the individuals that did leave eventually came back. It's that welcoming and inclusive type of environment here that is so special."

The UC San Diego guided walking tours, offered the first Sunday of each month at 2 p.m., take guests through the heart of campus to glimpse the undergraduate schools, the Price Center, UCSD Bookstore and select sculptures from the renowned Stuart Collection. Bus tours, offered each additional Sunday of the month at 2 p.m., feature an overview of UC San Diego Theatres, the Price Center, campus recreational facilities and include short stops at Geisel Library, Thornton Hospital and the Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

For UC San Diego free visitor tour reservations or for more information, call 858-534-4414 or visit <http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/tours/>.

For information on UC San Diego's upcoming 50th Anniversary celebration, visit www.50th.ucsd.edu.

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