

June 02, 2015 | By Christine Clark

Mike Judge and Members of Wong Fu Productions to be Honored by UC San Diego Alumni

Distinguished honorees recognized during UC San Diego Alumni Weekend, June 4-7

Distinguished alumni of the University of California, San Diego including filmmaker and animator Mike Judge, as well as all three members of the YouTube sensation, Wong Fu Productions will be recognized during the campus's annual Alumni Weekend, June 4-7. Also honored will be San Diego Unified School District superintendent Cindy Marten and founder of Realty Changers Christopher Yanov, among others.



The 2015 Alumni Celebration will mark the 37th year that UC San Diego Alumni has honored outstanding alumni and friends who exemplify a commitment to leadership, advocacy, philanthropy and service to UC San Diego. This year's honorees will be recognized in three categories: distinguished alumni, emerging leaders and true tritons.

Mike Judge, Distinguished Alumnus

Among the distinguished alumni awardees is Mike Judge, who graduated from UC San Diego with a degree in physics in 1985. Judge is an award-winning creator and producer of some of today's most popular movies and television series, including "King of the Hill," "Beavis and Butt-head" and "Office Space." In 1999, he won an Emmy for "King of the Hill," which is the second-longest running animated show in television history. The physicist-turned-animator, filmmaker and actor is now working on his latest television series, "Silicon Valley." The critically-acclaimed show is currently airing its second season on HBO.

Though Judge's career in Hollywood has yielded many successes, his transition into show-business was not a smooth one. After graduating from UC San Diego, Judge worked as an engineer, but had always dreamed of a career in comedy. He did imitations of his teachers and wanted to make animated films. However, Judge grew up in Albuquerque, N.M. and without connections to show business, so he felt there was no way he could succeed. Yet, after attending an animation festival, Judge realized that he didn't need have a lot of money or connections to a studio to make animated shorts. He then began making short animated films from his home, in Dallas, and sent VHS copies of them to MTV, Comedy Central and animation festivals. Within a week, Comedy Central called him, as did the festivals. He has been making TV series and movies ever since. This somewhat alternative path entails hard work, which UC San Diego helped prepare him for, Judge says.

"Getting a degree in physics prepared me for the idea [of having] a deadline—when you have to finish something, have to study for a test or pull an all-nighter," Judge says. "I remember when I was going to pitch the 'King of the Hill' show for Fox and I was just cramming, staying up all night to prepare and I remember thinking, 'this is just like finals.' There are a lot of things in life like that."

Philip Wang, Wesley Chan and Ted Fu of Wong Fu Productions, Emerging Leaders

Philip Wang, Wesley Chan and Ted Fu, who all graduated from UC San Diego in 2006 with degrees in visual arts, together run Wong Fu Productions. The growing independent production company has a well-known YouTube channel with more than 1 million subscribers and has garnered over 200 million views of short films, music videos and video blogs from its large and loyal fan base. Their creative work has been recognized for its striking quality and emotional depth, earning honors and praise from organizations like CNN, NPR, the Cannes Film Festival and the Sundance Film Festival.



The three met in a 2004 visual arts class and started making videos just for fun. "Our first movies were silly lip syncing videos that we put up online," says Wang. "Then we started getting thousands of hits and it just started snowballing from there." As seniors, the team created the short film "Yellow Fever," which has been viewed on YouTube millions of times.

The team says that a lot of their popularity stems from their realistic portrayal of Asian Americans. “There’s a lot of stereotyping in the mainstream media,” Wang says. “The actors in our movies don’t have accents; they’re not doing martial arts. We want to make movies that everyone can relate to and we hope we inspire other Asian Americans to be creative.”

Wong Fu is preparing to release their first feature film, “Everything Before Us.” They will talk about their rise to fame with alumni and current students from 2:30 to 3:45 p.m. on Friday, June 5 at the Price Center on campus for “[A Conversation with Wong Fu Productions.](#)”

The following individuals will also be recognized during the 2015 Alumni Celebration:

- **Cindy Marten, M.A. '95, Education Studies, Distinguished Alumna**

Cindy Marten has shown a tremendous commitment to making a real impact in the San Diego educational community. She has served as an educator for 25 years—as a teacher, an instructional leader and a school principal. In July 2013, Marten was appointed superintendent of the San Diego Unified School District, the second largest school district in the state of California.

- **Ken Kroner, Ph.D. '88, Economics, Distinguished Alumnus**

Ken Kroner is a global finance innovator, who serves as chief investment officer of Scientific Active Equity and global head of Multi-Asset Strategies at BlackRock, the world’s largest asset manager. In 2011, he and his wife, Jennifer, created the Kroner Family Endowed Fellowship with a gift to the Division of Social Sciences, allowing stellar students the opportunity to pursue research interests at UC San Diego. Kroner serves on the UC San Diego Foundation Board of Trustees and the Economics Leadership Council and has been a longtime supporter of many campus programs and initiatives.

- **Pierre Sleiman, M.B.A. '13, Rady School of Management, Emerging Leader**

Pierre Sleiman is the founder and CEO of Go Green Agriculture, an innovative company that grows produce inside climate-controlled greenhouses using hydroponics. His company has more than 400 customers including Whole Foods, Sprouts, Jimbo’s Naturally and Hyatt Hotels. In July 2014, Sleiman was honored as an Agriculture Champion of Change at the White House alongside other notable leaders who are doing extraordinary things to build the next generation of farming and ranching.

- **Chris Yanov, '99, Literature, True Triton**

Chris Yanov is the founder of Reality Changers, a San Diego-based program providing youth from disadvantaged backgrounds with the academic support, financial assistance and leadership training to become first-generation college students. Yanov was selected as an

inaugural leader of the San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention and also served as the chair of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce's Education and Workforce Development Committee.

- **Manuelita Brown, M.S. '76, Psychology, True Triton**

Manuelita Brown serves as the director of UC San Diego's Honor Achievement Workshops and is an active member of UC San Diego Alumni's Black Alumni Council and the UC San Diego Alumni Board of Directors. Since 2003, she has chaired the Black Alumni Scholarship Fund Committee and served as liaison between the UC San Diego Foundation, its scholarship office and the San Diego Foundation. A notable sculptor, Brown's latest work, a bronze statue of Sojourner Truth located on the UC San Diego campus, recognizes Truth's deep humanity, commitment to education and pursuit of equal rights.

The annual Alumni Celebration will be hosted on Saturday, June 6 during Alumni Weekend, June 4-7, and is open to the public. For award recipient and event details, please visit alumni.ucsd.edu/celebration or call (858) 534-3900.

The Triton Brunch, which will honor awardees in the True Triton category, is also open to the public and will take place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Sunday, June 7 at the Faculty Club. Tickets are \$25 with proceeds benefiting student scholarships at UC San Diego.

Information about Alumni Weekend can be accessed at alumni.ucsd.edu.

MEDIA CONTACT

Christine Clark, 858-534-7618, ceclark@ucsd.edu

UC San Diego's [Studio Ten 300](#) offers radio and television connections for media interviews with our faculty, which can be coordinated via studio@ucsd.edu. To connect with a UC San Diego faculty expert on relevant issues and trending news stories, visit <https://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/media-resources/faculty-experts>.