Dear PLF member,

The partnership between the President’s Leadership Fund donors and San Diego State University is a special one—a bond strengthened by our pride in SDSU and its outstanding students, faculty and staff.

The President’s Leadership Fund has been a catalyst for change at SDSU for more than 11 years. Generous donors have provided strategic investments that often grow to become major university initiatives. The PLF continues to play this essential role as the university implements its strategic plan, “Building on Excellence.” The plan’s initiatives will enhance student success, build upon research and creative excellence and engage our campus, our alumni and the San Diego community.

Thank you for supporting these innovative and entrepreneurial endeavors. I am pleased to share this update on the projects our PLF supporters made possible in 2012-13.

Our PLF donors are valued members of our SDSU family. I hope to see you at our artistic, cultural and athletics events on campus, as well as at our PLF donor appreciation events.

Thank you for everything you do for San Diego State University.

Elliot Hirshman, President

The President’s Leadership Fund

Annual Report 2014

Shaping Aztecs for Life

The President’s Leadership Fund supported a student engagement initiative to foster Aztecs for Life.

Organized by the Alumni Association, the initiative enhanced the students’ experience and raised awareness of the value of being a lifetime Aztec.

Events provided the opportunity for students to network with alumni, building the Aztec family.
Investment Highlights

Preventing Sports Injuries Through Innovation

The PLF supported the development of an inexpensive balance assessment device to prevent and diagnose concussions. Having one concussion increases your chances of having another and it is estimated that more than 50 percent of concussions go unreported or undiagnosed. This project developed software and a device that can measure balance with 99 percent accuracy, making major strides in undiagnosed. This project developed software and a device that can measure balance with 99 percent accuracy, making major strides in understanding and diagnosing concussions.

“If you’re an athlete and your livelihood depends on the results of these sports, your health is critical. If you sustain a concussion, you need to be able to get an accurate diagnosis and treatment.” – Daniel Goble, exercise and nutritional sciences professor

Saving Lives Through Cutting-Edge Technology

The project advanced the patent-pending technology of repeat station imaging (RSI) for operational and commercial implementation. RSI involves capturing airborne imagery of the earth’s surface in a repetitive fashion from nearly the same stations in the sky over periods of minutes to years to detect changes or movements of features. Potential applications include detecting improvised explosive devices, locating stranded hikers and assessing structural damage.

“The PLF made it possible to produce a video showing how RSI is implemented for wide-area surveillance, develop an analytical model and provide students the opportunity to participate in cutting-edge technology. PLF support has also strengthened our opportunities to secure licensing agreements with aerospace and defense companies.” – Douglas Stow, professor of geography

Transforming Dialogue Through Filmmaking

“When Cancer Calls” is a unique film that conveys important messages about how cancer patients, family members and medical experts communicate. By integrating education and entertainment, the film is a resource to expedite meaningful dialogue about delicate, complex and frequently misunderstood communication challenges arising from cancer diagnosis, treatment and prognosis.

“The PLF launched this project which has now emerged as a national documentary film on communication and cancer. The collaborations arising from this innovative project will further benefit SDSU and its reputation for pursuing impactful projects that bring together academic, clinical and community populations.” – Wayne A. Beach, professor of communication

Integrating Change in Calculus

This project provides systematic changes to significantly increase students’ understanding of and appreciation for the concepts of introductory calculus. In revising the way calculus is taught, the program offers peer tutors to assist with topics selected by instructors, incorporating technology (online videos, applets and graphing software) and monitoring students’ progress. The main goal of the project is to increase students’ conceptual knowledge of the ideas introduced in Calculus I and decrease the rate at which students receive a non-passing grade in this class.

“The peer tutors are great in helping us really understand the material. They are students just like us, who know what we struggle with and know how to help us.” – Edwin Coronado, computer engineering student

Fostering Student Success with Faculty Support

The African American Mentoring Program recruits, retains and sustains students in undergraduate and graduate-level programs at SDSU. The program was formed by a group of professors who saw the need to help African American students navigate through their academic careers. Students receive support in professional growth, self-awareness and self-confidence.

“AAMP has provided a soft spot for me to land during tough times throughout the school year. Working with SDSU faculty members and seeing how much they invest in the program makes me want to be in their shoes some day, offering the same support to future African American students at SDSU.” – Daunte Haynes, graduate student in the College of Education

Other Awarded Projects

- Hand-Held Medical Scanning Device – a working “tricorder” was built by the SDSU Qualcomm X-Team and entered in the Qualcomm X-Prize competition.
- Campaign Regarding the Negative Impacts of Single-Use Bottled Water Consumption was run by the Drink Responsibly Campaign. Astez on Top
- Inside Smartphones allowed high school students to learn the multifaceted world of wireless communications and become inspired to pursue engineering careers.
- A Mathematics Problem Library for Online Homework supports student learning of introductory discrete mathematics and will be available worldwide and free of charge.
- SDSU String Academy created a program designed to give students ages 9-18 conservatory-level instruction on the violin and cello.
- Mapping the Past, Present and Future fosters San Diego Native American youth success and builds a stronger relationship between SDSU and Native American communities.
- West-Coast Premiere of “Lineage - The Margaret Walker Project” is a commissioned jazz/gospel-fusion performance presented by SDSU’s School of Music and Dance.
- Dear Doc Post: SDSU Letters Home During World War II analyzed and digitized original letters from San Diego State students and alumni who served during the WWII.
- SDSU Mariachi Ensemble adds another dimension to the School of Music and Dance.