1992

Alcalá View 1992 09.02

University of San Diego Publications and Human Resources offices

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Academic Computing’s Ruben Valdez was named the 1992 Staff Employee of the Year at the July 31 Employee Appreciation Picnic.

Valdez Named 1992 Employee of the Year

By Jacqueline Genovese

When Ruben Valdez’s mother got a job with USD’s Physical Plant Department in 1976, she was thrilled, but concerned. She couldn’t drive and needed a ride to work.

So Ruben, the oldest of her 11 children, did what he thought a son should do; he secured a job with Physical Plant, too.

Today, both mother and son are still at Alcala Park, but they no longer work together. That’s because Ruben, who was named the 1992 Staff Employee of the Year at this year’s Staff Employee Appreciation Picnic, has earned a position as a micro-computer repair technician in Academic Computing.

It’s a job he earned the hard way. Valdez came to USO at age 20 with limited technical skills and a burning desire to “know how things worked.” While working as a custodian in Serra Hall, he started tinkering with the computers. “The professors there were very, very helpful to me,” he remembers. “They saw that I was interested in the computers, and they lent me books about computer programming.”

Valdez spent all of his spare time teaching himself computer programming languages and learning the ins and outs of computer hardware. Before long, he was assisting professors and students with their computer needs.

“Ruben’s broom closet became kind of like an office,” explains Academic Computing’s Dr. Patricia Anderson. “Everyone knew to go to him if they had a problem. He’s a self-taught computer guru.”

In 1988, a data processing assistant position opened in Academic Computing, and Dr. Anderson encouraged Valdez to apply. “Ruben is so gifted, and there was such a need for his skills all over campus,” she explains.

Valdez’s duties included supervision of the lab-operations in three

Oops!

As many of you noticed, the story on LaVerne Hanscom in last month’s issue ended in mid-sentence. That was not intentional. The last sentence and a half were inadvertently dropped from the copy. We apologize for the error. Following is the complete paragraph:

Hanscom says she is grateful that she has had such a supportive community at USD. “I went through two very hard times in my life while I was here, and I don’t know how I would have handled it if I weren’t in such a caring place. A lot of people didn’t even know I was having a problem. Their everyday kindness was enough.”
Dr. Hughes Gives 22nd Convocation Address

President Author Hughes presented his 22nd Convocation Address to faculty and administrators on Sept. 11 in the Hahn University forum.

He began his address by recapping the efforts of the National Association of Independent Colleges (NAICU) during the past year. The association met in Washington D.C last spring in an effort to lobby the federal government to increase the awareness of independent colleges in the re-authorization of the Higher Education Act.

Dr. Hughes also talked about the Oct. 10-13 accreditation visit of the Western Association for Schools and Colleges (WASC).

"The entire university will be involved in the evaluation of the committee. They will be evaluating us on how well we accomplish our stated mission, and on how well we meet WASC standards," he explained.

Last year, as a part of the accreditation process, the university completed a campus-wide self-study. Dr. Hughes said the study was an excellent one, but that he had some concerns.

"There is an overall negative tone that permeates the chapter dealing with faculty and staff," he said. "It seems that a lot of people were looking at things with the attitude that the glass is half-empty instead of half-full."

The president encouraged everyone at the meeting to meet with WASC members during their visit and "express yourselves openly and freely."

Other topics covered in Dr. Hughes' address:

* Freshman enrollment
  "We're happy with the numbers this year. 29 percent of our incoming freshman are from minority backgrounds. Our student population is more accurately reflecting our society's population."

* Search for new Academic Vice President
  "We've received 65 applications so far. We want to bring five or six finalists to campus in November.

* Purchase of Diocesan building
  "We'll be buying the building and the property around it, which includes 200 parking spaces. But we won't be able to move into that building until January of 1994 at the earliest."

* Proposed Parking Structure
  "The parking structure we're proposing will be built behind the Hahn University Center and have about 600 spaces. We're waiting for approval from the city on the construction of it."

* Proposed Sports Center
  "We are currently conducting a feasibility study to see if there is money in the community to support this kind of project."

Valdez

(Continued from page one)

student labs, performing end-user micro and minicomputer support for students, faculty and staff, providing maintenance and repair for hardware, installing operations systems and applications software and performing hard drive diagnostics and repair, including virus detection and hard disk crash recovery.

This summer, the hard-working father of four was promoted to microcomputer technician. He will now be responsible for trouble-shooting and consulting for all micro-computers in academic and administrative areas.

Valdez says he couldn't be happier. "Even though I've been on campus for 13 years, I never felt as good as I do in Academic Computing."

The feeling is mutual. In nominating Valdez for Employee of the Year,

Dr. Jack Pope, director of Academic Computing, wrote: "The respect Ruben has earned among diverse campus constituencies is a tribute to his hard work, high intelligence, graciousness, generosity and commitment. His technical aptitude and experience is complemented by strong character, a caring attitude, and integrity."

Dr. Pope went on to quote a recent letter he had received from a grateful faculty member: "...it is a rare combination when one finds an outstanding technical person who is also a delight as a human being...Ruben is genuinely concerned with the welfare of others, especially those with uncooperative computers."

Although Valdez skills are much in demand in the corporate world, he's not planning to leave Alcalá Park. "USD gave me the chance to learn and better myself. To be somebody," he says. "I'm grateful for that."
Department of the Month
Mail Center

The Mail Center staff includes (left to right): Ken Daughtry, Lisa Smith, Mark Bertolero, Pat Helm, Danny Marines, Cheance Adair, Troy Shivers and Greg Stephenson.

1. Where is the Mail Center located?
On the first floor of Loma Hall, the new campus building behind Guadalupe Hall that was completed this summer.

2. What are the functions of your department?
We sort and deliver all incoming and outgoing mail to campus departments as well as to 1,350 student mail boxes. We also process bulk mailings for various departments and meter all outgoing university mail. We have UPS and Federal Express service for the students and the university. The service window business keeps us very busy. For example, our stamp purchase totals for the past two days were $875 and $921.

3. What is the biggest challenge your department faces?
The sheer volume of the mail we handle. I'm very proud of the fact that, for the most part, we're able to process all the mail that arrives daily.

4. How has your department changed over the last 10 years?
In 1978 we had one and a half employees and two work-study students. Now we have five full-time and two half-time employees and five work-study students. The university has grown incredibly in the past 15 years, not just the number of students, but departments and employees as well. This has meant a huge increase in the volume of mail we handle.

5. What is one thing you would like the campus community to know about your department and its functions?
That we are a campus mail center and not a full-fledged post office. Consequently, we're restricted to the services we can perform. We try to do the best we can with what we have. We can't do some of the personal things we used to be able to do because we don't have the time, i.e. look up zip-codes. (We do have a directory for your use at the Mail Center.)

We're also working hard to keep postage costs down for the departments. We've joined the BRAMAS program for business reply mail, and that saves us 7 cents on each piece. We also save departments approximately $10,000 a year by preparing in-house pre-sorted first class mail. We anticipate expanding this savings in the future.

Benefit Briefs
(Continued from page two)

*You plan to change medical and or dental carriers.
*You plan to add or drop dependents from coverage.

A brightly colored personal invitation will be sent to employees who must go to open enrollment. Bring your invitation with you when you enroll. Special instructions will be given with each invitation color. Hopefully, this will make your enrollment-task easier!

Anniversary Employees To Be Honored At Special Celebration

Starting a new tradition, staff and administrative employees celebrating their 10-, 15- and 20-year anniversaries will be honored at a reception in November.

“We wanted to do something extra special for those employees who have dedicated so many years to the university,” explains Human Resource’s Calista Frank.

President Author Hughes, along with vice presidents Fred Brooks, Tom Burke, John McNamara and Sr. Sally Furay, will be in attendance. Employees will receive their service awards during a special presentation portion of the event.

For more information, call Calista at ext. 4594.

Oops Again!

In last month’s issue, the Media Center’s John Frazer was left off of the 5-year anniversary list and the list of people who donated prizes to the picnic.

Frazer donated a free hour of “Harmonica John’s Music To Go,” as a door prize.

We apologize for the error.
Canlen Wins Short Story Contest

Brae Canlen, who works part-time in Copley Library, recently won second place in a nationwide Writer's Digest short story contest, and she's excited. Not about the prize she won — a set of five Merriam Webster reference books — ("A perfect prize for someone who works in a library!" she laughs.)

No, Canlen is excited because the story she submitted, "You Be the Dog," is actually a chapter from the novel she has been writing for the past three years. "Hopefully, this recognition will help me when it's time to get the novel published," she explains.

Canlen's novel is about religion, politics, race relations and everyday life in South Philadelphia. The story revolves around three characters, a mother and her two daughters.

Following is an excerpt from Canlen's award-winning story:

My mother and I are meeting for coffee this afternoon at Soho House. We are like two girlfriends getting together to gossip, except that we are not at all like two girlfriends. We started meeting like this a year ago, at my sister's suggestion, after reading "Females in Trouble: Mothers and Daughters in Conflict." Monica insisted that the three of us read the book at the same time, and then discuss it together. I knew this would be trouble, and it was. We just rehashed the same old conflicts and came to the same exact conclusions: basically, that each of us could do a much better job of leading the others' lives. My mother and I didn't speak for weeks. But we kept one good idea from the book, and now we have the same old dialogues in brand new settings.

Cops on Bikes

Officer Bob Brown is one of three Public Safety officers who have traded patrol cars for mountain bikes this year. The officers say being on a bike makes them more accessible to the people, allows them to maneuver through campus quickly, and decreases air pollution and gas consumption. They say response from employees and students has been overwhelmingly positive.