Mulling Over 50 Years With Father Mullen

His Planned Gift Will Benefit the Many USD Organizations He Shepherds

BY KRISTYN SHRIEVE

The proof of what Father Owen J. “OJ” Mullen means to the University of San Diego is in the many students who for decades have gathered at his table for lunch in the student dining room. Father Mullen has served many roles during his two stints on campus. He started as a chaplain to graduate and law students. As a retired colonel in the Army, Mullen also has connections to ROTC students and student veterans. But he’s probably most well known for his relationships with student-athletes — as chaplain to the football, baseball and men’s basketball teams — and with members of Greek Life, through his role as chapter chaplain and national president of Phi Kappa Theta Fraternity, which with a mere seven members, was the only fraternity at USD on campus when Mullen first arrived at Alcalá Park in 1981.


“I broke down for the first time in my life during that Mass,” Mullen says. “A lot of the organizations I’m involved with were represented and someone from each group was chosen to bring up the gifts during the offering. They came up one by one — basketball players, fraternity brothers, lots of organizations. It was touching and I got a little choked up.”

Despite many moves and assignments, which have taken him all over the United States, USD is Mullen’s home. He recently made a planned gift to USD, which assures that, upon his passing, financial support will be given to all the campus organizations he holds dear.

“I’ve been here 20 years now,” says Mullen who, on any given day, can be found eating lunch with what seems like an ever-revolving group of students in the Student Life Pavilion. “Everyone at USD has been very good to me.”

Mullen attended La Salle Institute, a Catholic military high school in Troy, N.Y. At 25, Mullen was ordained on May 16, 1964, at the Wilmington Diocese of Delaware. A graduate of St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md., he went on to Villanova University to earn a master’s degree in educational psychology. In 1968, he joined the U.S. Army.

Meanwhile, Mullen worked with high school students for 17 years, doubling as a parish priest, before eventually becoming a pastor at a parish in Bethany Beach, Del. But the lure of working in higher education was strong and, unbeknownst to his superiors, he took a trip to San Diego that changed his life.

It was the summer of 1981 and he’d heard about an opening for a new position at USD. Following 21 one-on-one interviews, Mullen went back to his bishop and asked for permission to take the job he’d already been offered.

That fall, Mullen became USD’s inaugural chaplain to USD’s graduate and law students. He set up new programs, took students on retreats and brought in speakers from the Thomas More Society.

From 1981 to 1989, Mullen took on other roles — as chaplain of the football, basketball and baseball teams. He also coordinated the Sunday evening Mass at Founders Chapel and, sometime as a resident director, oversaw the RA’s in Delices Hall, both male residence halls that was later renamed Maher Hall.

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Academy at West Point. In 1989, he left years at a parish in Honolulu, Hawaii, Catholic Church called Mullen back to participating in full-time ministry and he worked for a few years in conference travel and head coach Dale Lindsey was named IFL, Coach of the Year. In baseball, shortest hit fielder Hefler was named MCC, Player of the Year. Dale Hill was named Pitcher of the Year, outfielder Byrson Brignac was recognized as Freshman of the Year and head coach Rich Hill was named Coach of the Year.

“We’ve had some amazing victories and some terrible losses,” Mullen recalls. “It was an honor to be there over the years. I’m not sure my parochial past, reflects Mullen, who is known by students as the Harp-Durantson pastor — ruling for 50 years before hanging up his harlot as recently as last year. The biggest move I ever made was walking into the bishop’s office that morning and telling him, ‘I want to go to the University of San Diego’. It was a bold move. And it truly was a turning point in my life.”

Steve Ensminger made a meaningful major gift in the simplest way possible. He named the University of San Diego as the “beneficiary” of his transfer-on-death investment account. When he passed away, USD immediately received all the assets ($580,000) in his account. This gift will provide scholarships to USD students.

There are some very good reasons to designate USD as your beneficiary:

1. It’s easy and cost-free. Inquire when you open an account at a bank or brokerage or request a designation benefit form from your insurance company or retirement plan.
2. When you have a will, or will you, your account is not part of your estate, so you avoid probate. Direct funds transfer to a designated beneficiary avoid probate court. It’s time-consuming and costly.
3. A life insurance policy is an excellent gift to USD. For an immediate charitable income tax deduction, consider ownership assignment to USD.
4. Creating an endowed family legacy scholarship. Legacy endowments are a permanent reminder to children and grandchildren of your generosity. As the donor, you choose the guidelines for scholarship recipient. Each year your family will sit with your recipient at the USD Scholarship Appreciation Luncheon. The Bridges Academy Endowed Scholarship continues to grow year after year thanks to the support of many generous attendees of the Bridges Academy Lecture Series. Each gift, no matter the size, contributes to the ability of this fund to award more impactful scholarships for our two recipients each year. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Bridges Academy participants who made a gift in 2014. Thank you for bringing our students one step closer to achieving their dreams.

University of San Diego Career Destinations USD Career Services cross-data on students completing their undergraduate degrees. This data, gathered from multiple sources, reflects the initial career destination for 73% of those who graduated between August 2013 and May 2014. For more information, contact Career Services at (619) 260-4654.

First Job Offer

91% of 2015-16 respondents received their first job within three months of graduating.

Employers of USD Graduates

Aerotek
Deloitte, LLP
Edfie Gallo Winery
Enterprise Car-Rent-A-Car
Ernst & Young, LLP
Facebook
Franklin, Roseman + Co.
GKN Aerospace
Google
Grant Thornton, LLP
Houzz
Insight Global
KPMG, LLP
McCladey, LLP
McDermott, Will & Emery
Nordstrom
Northrop Grumman
PricewaterhouseCoopers
Sapient
Solar Turbines Incorporated
Spartanburg Business School
Target Corporation
Texas A&M University
Thermo Fisher Scientific
University of San Diego
UTC Aerospace Systems
Weis Fargo

LEAP Scholarships USD will continue to excel, meeting higher aspirations with each graduating class. Marked by levels of giving, but generosity of spirit — planned giving donors ensure USD will continue to excel, continue hoping aspirations with each graduating class.

A “Simple Gift” of $580,000

Puente de Oro is Spanish for “Bridge of Gold.” It signifies gifts of extraordinary generosity from one generation to another. Through each benevolence—which is not marked by levels of giving, but generosity of spirit—planned giving donors ensure USD will continue to excel, continue hoping aspirations with each graduating class.

Leave a USD Legacy

Request more information about how you can support the Bridges Scholarship Fund or other scholarships at USD, contact the Office of Planned Giving, at (619) 260-492.

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