



UC San Diego Foundation Trustee



Sheldon C. Engelhorn, '72

If you'd like a snapshot of the UC San Diego undergraduate – more practical than romanticized – Sheldon Engelhorn is the person to talk with. The father of a UCSD student, Sheldon attended UC San Diego himself, choosing the campus because it was close to home and affordable – circumstances that have shaped his personal involvement with the university, and his philanthropic ideals.

As a Trustee of the UC San Diego Foundation, Sheldon serves on a committee that advises the UC San Diego Student Foundation, which allows him to pursue one of his passions: spending time with students. “It’s a fun, interesting group of bright, engaged young people. We give them feedback on business plans and investments.” And, he proudly adds, “Their portfolio did better than the market. They’re smart kids!”

Sheldon and his wife, Susan, stand behind smart kids in other meaningful ways, such as establishing The Engelhorn Scholarships for qualified transfer students who complete two years of community college. “By extending UCSD’s reach to a wider pool of talent, we equip more promising young people for learning and innovation. Not all the people with the brains, imagination and commitment to solve the world’s problems have the financial resources to attend a school that will cultivate them the way UCSD can.”

In addition to Foundation trustee, Sheldon serves as president of the Alumni Association, where he has been active in applying a corporate board model: “The board is an advisory group that helps develop and execute strategy, rather than handling operations, like events.” A hands-on contributor to UC San Diego, he is on the Director’s Cabinet at Scripps, and recently served two years as chair of Chancellor’s Associates.

Sheldon graduated from UC San Diego in 1972 with a B.S. in Biology. He is a former executive vice president for NOVEX, which was founded in 1987 with UCSD alumnus Richard Chan '74, and operated two facilities in Germany. Before starting NOVEX, Sheldon worked at UCSD as a research associate from 1972 to 1979, and in various positions at Bio Rad Laboratories in Richmond, California, from 1979 to 1987. In 2000, NOVEX merged with Invitrogen, a company co-founded by UCSD alumnus Lyle Turner.

Sheldon has since retired from these ventures, but is involved in a couple of start-ups as a principle or advisor. He currently devotes most of his time to individual pursuits, family life, philanthropy and volunteer work – a good bit of it on the UC San Diego campus, where he is unquestionably affecting change. “The whole point is, what is the difference you make with the time, advice or money you give? Here’s what it was before, and here’s what you did. That’s the point.”