



UC San Diego Foundation Trustee



Irwin M. Jacobs

Though he may be a giant among digital entrepreneurs, when talking about himself, Dr. Irwin Jacobs is a man of few words – and still in an East Coast accent, even after living in San Diego for the better part of his adult life. When asked why he signed on as a UC San Diego Foundation trustee, he says simply, “To be of service.” Irwin has been serving the students, faculty and graduates of the university since 1966, when he was recruited to UC San Diego as Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, to help launch the brand-new campus.

Originally a hotel administration major at Cornell University, Irwin switched his bachelor’s degree to electrical engineering, then went on to M.I.T. for his master’s and Ph.D., where he stayed as an assistant/associate professor. Though he retired from academia in 1972, he still lectures and will tell students in his business or entrepreneur talks that the accounting and business law classes for his hotel coursework ultimately proved very valuable when running a company, first Linkabit, then Qualcomm.

Irwin is the co-founder and former chairman and CEO of Qualcomm Incorporated, a San Diego-based Fortune 500 company known for its innovative cellular phone technology and as the largest supplier of semiconductors to wireless phone manufacturers. The company, founded in 1985, has expanded to include over 14,000 employees and annual revenues over \$10 billion.

Irwin has received numerous awards in recognition, including the National Medal of Technology from the President, for his achievements in the corporate world as well as for his leadership in the San Diego community. He serves as chairman of the National Academy of Engineering and the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, he is on the international advisory board for the Israel Institute of Technology, and serves on the advisory board for the School of Economics and Management at Tsing Hua University in Beijing. He is also active on the Pacific Council on International Policy in Los Angeles.

Closer to home, in addition to the Irwins’ extraordinary generosity to the university, Irwin lends advisory expertise to UC San Diego, mostly in the Jacobs School of Engineering, and was among the community leaders who helped shape and launch the Rady School of Management. He and his wife, Joan, are active and enthusiastic supporters of the La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego Symphony, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, and several other performing and visual arts organizations, including the New York-based White Nights Foundation, which enables the Mariinsky Theatre’s ballet, orchestra and opera from St. Petersburg, Russia, to



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perform in the U.S. By way of explaining how he became involved, he notes, “I met Valery Gergiev, the Artistic and General Director, during a visit to St. Petersburg with two faculty friends from UCSD and was very impressed with his music and his accomplishments. The next year, Joan and I were invited back to St. Petersburg by the International Friends of the Kennedy Center to receive an award along with Valery. We met members of the White Nights Foundation and have remained involved since.”

Irwin and Joan have four sons: two attended UC Berkeley, two UC San Diego. When asked why boys would attend a college where their dad worked, he noted: “They grew up knowing the campus. They came to UCSD a lot when they were young, so they ended up with a good feeling about it.” As proud as he is of the University of California, he is also delighted that two grandchildren now at college have chosen to study in New York – one at Columbia and one at Cornell.