Trustee

Steve Hart '80

"Being asked to serve on the UC San Diego Foundation Board is probably the result of hanging around the university a lot," says Steve Hart, who started hanging around while earning his master's degree in 1980, in mathematics. "I was one of those people who wanted to be a student for life, so by getting involved in things like Alumni Association events, I get to spend time with students and professors."

Steve and his wife, Sue, who earned her PhD in mathematics at UC San Diego, have done more than spend time with students; they've removed significant barriers for low-income undergraduates to attend college here. The Harts, who have supported scholarships for many years, were instrumental in launching the Alumni Leadership Scholarship Program in 2004. "We were fortunate to be able to help build an endowment base so others could get involved in creating awards for students in financial need. It's been very successful."

As co-founder of ViaSat Inc., he knows something about innovative startups. ViaSat produces satellite and other digital communication products that enable fast, secure, efficient communications to any location. Steve helped lead the firm's rapid growth from three people in 1986 to a global company of over 2,000 employees today, among them, local college graduates. "At last count, we had close to 150 UC San Diego alumni employees."

In his position as ViaSat's chief technical officer, he provides technical direction across the company in areas of networking, architectures, software and information security. Steve has provided leadership in a number of product areas, helping ViaSat grow from individual "black-box" products to integrated network communication systems. He led the development of new satellite networking algorithms and directed the creation of the ViaSat Information Security business.

Prior to joining ViaSat, Steve was a staff engineer and manager at Linkabit, and before that worked as a computer security analyst at the Merdan group on various projects for the National Security Agency and the Navy. He served in the US Air Force as an imagery intelligence specialist for four years.

Steve has authored numerous technical papers in satellite networking and computer and communications security, and holds patents for inventions in these areas.

With more than 25 years' experience in design, development and engineering management for digital communications and networking equipment, Steve has been tapped frequently by UC San Diego faculty and students. In 2004 he was named the 2004 Outstanding Executive by the UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering for his work with the school's Gordon Leadership

Center, and his dedication to ensuring the highest quality education for its students through close ties with San Diego's high-tech industry.

In addition to their generosity to UC San Diego students and faculty, Steve and Sue have more recently made a very interesting contribution by helping to launch a new venture at UC San Diego: The Arthur C. Clark Center for Human Imagination. "This is one of my favorite projects at UCSD," says Steve. "I'm thrilled with it, and in five years from now, we'll be looking at a major international center." (http://imagination.ucsd.edu)

Steve serves as an advisor for UC San Diego's College of Physical Sciences, and off campus is involved with nonprofits such as Palindrome Advisors and Mainly Mozart.

"Like the other Foundation trustees, I've been involved in a lot of things at UC San Diego," says Steve, who's looking forward to exploring even more. "We're all people who are broadly associated with the campus and trying to help it do great things."