

A Transformative Presidency

For 14 years, President Don DeRosa
has strengthened Pacific in every way

BY KATE WASHINGTON

This article is the second in a series commemorating the service of University of the Pacific's transformative President, Donald V. DeRosa, who will retire at the end of June. The first part explored how Dr. DeRosa's educational philosophy evolved and how it has been implemented at Pacific.



On a sunny, breezy October day, a suit-clad crowd packed the courtyard of the Don and Karen DeRosa University Center to dedicate the gleaming new hub of student life.

At this moment, University of the Pacific could hardly have seemed stronger: Even the tiny tiger-striped moths fluttering through the crowd seemed symbolic. It was a banner day for the University and for its twenty-third president, Donald V. DeRosa.

DeRosa became Pacific's president in 1995 and will retire in June 2009. His accomplishments stand as hallmarks of a remarkable and transformative fourteen-year tenure. The University Center and the new Biological Sciences Center are the most recent additions to the more than \$200 million invested in new construction and renovation on all three campuses.



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In addition, his leadership has brought about record growth in student enrollment and in the university's endowment, which has tripled during his tenure with the success of a recent fundraising campaign and wise investment. He has instigated a visionary initiative in social and emotional intelligence and brought strong leadership in whole-student learning and student life, for which he was recently honored with the prestigious 2009 NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) President's Award. He has led the creation of distinguished programs and institutes like the Brubeck Institute, and brought about an increase in community spirit and shared governance across Pacific's diverse campuses and programs.

What Pacific's students, alumni, and other community members might not realize is how much of that impact was directly inspired by DeRosa's personal history. His achievements at the University represent not just the peak of a distinguished career, but also the natural outgrowth of his upbringing, and the educational philosophy he developed as a result. DeRosa's path was not unlike those of Pacific's many first-generation college students. He is the child of second-generation Americans, the first in his family to go to college, a man who worked summer jobs to stay in school and benefited from encouraging mentors. His emphasis on fostering student life, mentorship, and access to education has been strongly influenced by his own experience.

DeRosa's parents, though born in the United States, spent a portion of their childhood in Italy. "When he was 16, my dad was given the choice of remaining in Italy or coming to the United States, because his father could no longer afford to send him to school," DeRosa recounts. "He made the brave choice to leave Italy, knowing that the real opportunity might come for his children and his children's children."

That opportunity was one that DeRosa's parents made sure he understood as he was growing up in working-class Eastchester, New York. "My parents always emphasized that I could be anything that I wanted to be," he says. "Today, I think I more fully appreciate that message."

They also stressed their patriotism and pride in the United States. "My father talked about the incredible feeling that he had when he saw the Statue of Liberty," DeRosa says. "We'd take the nickel ferry from the Battery out to Staten Island to see relatives, and he would always get emotional when he would look at 'the Lady,' as he called it. He believed in the values of this country."

Preeminent among those values was education, something both of DeRosa's parents extolled. "When the opportunity for college came along, my mother encouraged

me not to remain in Eastchester," DeRosa recalls, smiling as he thinks of his mother, Jeanne, who is 101. Last fall, she made the trip to Stockton for the dedication of the

DeRosa University Center. "My mother was one who always wanted me to stretch myself beyond where I was."

Going away to American International College in Springfield, Mass., was, indeed, a stretch. He had grown up in a small, tight-knit community, with friends living in the same modest apartment building his family occupied, and attending the same public schools. It was also a financial stretch, though that was nothing new: he had been working at various jobs, from delivering papers to bussing tables, since the age of 14. “During college, I always had summer and Christmas holiday jobs, but the best was working in the post office delivering mail in Scarsdale, New York, at Christmas,” he says. “The tips were very good — people were very generous.”

A modest baseball scholarship also helped defray costs. Baseball had been part of DeRosa’s all-American boyhood, and his team remains the Yankees. “I probably saw my first baseball game in 1946 or 1947,” he says. “My father and I took two buses and a subway. I remember vividly sitting in the 75-cent seats and being thrilled because I got to see Joe DiMaggio play.”

As DeRosa became older, he played the game and eventually was awarded a scholarship. “I was a pitcher,” says DeRosa, flexing his wrist to mimic a throwing movement. His best pitch? “It was a kind of cut fast ball — though they weren’t called that then.”

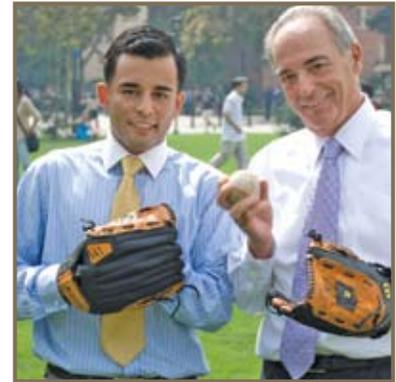
DeRosa’s commitment to student-centered learning developed not just thanks to his early experience, but also over a long and distinguished career in teaching and administration; he also credits his wife, Karen, with helping him to see the crucial importance of student life. After graduate school at Kent State, DeRosa taught for 16 years at Bowling Green State University — a time of professional success and personal satisfaction. He and his first wife had three children, Carol, Joseph and Lauren, all of whom now live in North Carolina. He was nominated for teaching awards, became chair of the psychology department and met his wife, Karen, who was then working as an administrator in Student Life at Bowling Green. He accepted a prestigious American Council on Education Fellowship at the University of California at San Diego in 1984–85.

“Bowling Green or La Jolla? Bowling Green. . . La Jolla. It was an easy choice,” DeRosa says, with a laugh. “Karen encouraged me to take the fellowship. She encouraged me to think about doing things beyond what I was doing at that time.”

After the fellowship, DeRosa entered administration at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, becoming dean of the graduate school and eventually provost, before moving to Pacific as president in 1995. The couple’s two sons, Michael and David, were born in North Carolina.

DeRosa stresses that the successful blending of the DeRosa family, as well as the success of his own career, is the product of a true partnership with Karen. “Karen’s the glue that holds us together,” he says. “Beyond that, there have been so many times I wanted to talk to somebody about a matter that I was dealing with at the University, and I could always talk to Karen and gain some new insight. She feels as passionate about Pacific as I do.”

That strong passion for Pacific, its mission, and its students has been evident throughout DeRosa’s presidency. Although Pacific has long enjoyed a strong reputation, when DeRosa arrived at the University in 1995 it was faced with distinct challenges. “There was never a question of the quality of the education,” DeRosa recalls. “But we had not been able



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— Edwin Lindo, Student Body President



Donald V. DeRosa is named the 23rd president of University of the Pacific.



Pacific launches the Matching Cal Grant Program, a first in California.



Dave '42 and Lola '45 Brubeck select Pacific to receive the Brubeck Collection. Pacific establishes the Brubeck Institute a year later to honor the Brubecks' legacy.

Construction begins on Monagan Hall, followed by Brookside Hall, housing over 800 students.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges reaffirms Pacific's accreditation for a full 10-year term.

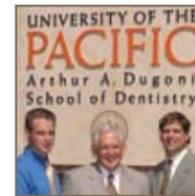


Pacific celebrates its Sesquicentennial

Pacific receives a gift of \$13 million from the Thomas J. Long Foundation. The pharmacy school is named the Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

\$200 million comprehensive campaign "Investing in Excellence" launched.

Pacific McGeorge School of Law becomes a participant in the St. Hope Project to revitalize Sacramento's Oak Park neighborhood.



Dental school named the Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry in honor of its dean of 26 years.

Pacific McGeorge School of Law is ranked in the top 100 law schools by U.S. News & World Report.

The campaign exceeds its \$200 million goal a year ahead of schedule.

INVESTING IN EXCELLENCE
THE CAMPAIGN FOR PACIFIC



Pacific opens its first green building, the Don and Karen DeRosa University Center.

DeRosa receives the national President's Award from NASPA — Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

A Phi Beta Kappa chapter is installed.

1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009



Phil Gilbertson appointed as University's first Provost.

Rigorous examination of all University programs begins.

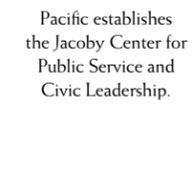
San Francisco 49ers select Pacific's Stockton campus for their summer training camp through 2002.

The Pacific Intercollegiate Athletics Center is built.



The Jeannette Powell Art Center and the Geosciences Center open.

The seeds of Pacific's Social-Emotional Intelligence initiative are planted with a Stockton campus presentation by Daniel Goleman.



Pacific establishes the Jacoby Center for Public Service and Civic Leadership.



The Health Sciences Learning Center and Clinics is built.



Men's Basketball earns the first of three straight Big West Conference championships.

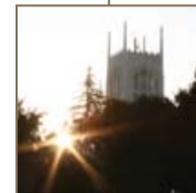
Business Forecasting Center opens.

Baun Fitness Center, William Knox Holt Memorial Library and Wendell Phillips Center are expanded and renovated.

Men's Basketball reaches the second round of the NCAA playoffs for the second year in a row.



The Global Center for Social Entrepreneurship is established.



DeRosa secures \$100 million estate gift from the late Robert and current Regent Jeannette Powell.

The comprehensive campaign exceeds its goal at \$330 million.

Biological Sciences Center opens.



Construction begins on the Janssen-Lagorio Multipurpose Gymnasium and the John T. Chambers Technology Center.

to manage our resources effectively. It was required that we stop running deficits and begin making investments in our priorities — academic excellence.”

Through key cuts, such as those of academic programs with low enrollment, as well as, for Pacific, striking fundraising success (a recent campaign raised more than \$330 million), the University's financial

position was strengthened. At the same time, it has achieved even-greater academic success. “We've made significant strides,” DeRosa says. Not only have Pacific faculty, students, and programs received national awards, but undergraduate student and professional school applications have risen dramatically.

Attention to every aspect of campus

life is a hallmark of DeRosa's presidency. For instance, when DeRosa arrived at the University, the residence halls badly needed updating, a task that was tackled immediately: “We needed to get the entire campus wired. The most our students were able to do was hope for a hookup to a phone jack,” he says, and chuckles. Since then, two new residence halls have been built, and every

existing residence hall has been renovated. At Pacific, the 55,000-square-foot DeRosa University Center is positioned at the heart of the campus and central to each student's daily life. And, as Edwin Lindo, Pacific's student body president 2008–09, noted at the dedication ceremony, “We would not be here today without President DeRosa's extraordinary vision and leadership.”

It's a sentiment widely shared by a University community immeasurably enriched and enhanced by DeRosa's 14 years of leadership. As Pamela A. Eibeck takes the helm this summer, Pacific has a strong base from which to continue its growth. As President Emeritus, DeRosa and Karen — who will split their time between North Carolina and California — plan to

remain involved at the University. “You never want to leave something you love, but I'm in good health and the University is in good health. This was the right time to make a decision to leave,” he says. “Whenever I'm called on by the University, I'm prepared to be helpful. A part of me will always be connected to Pacific.”