The Karnigs: Celebrating a presidency
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The presidency of Albert Karnig aimed to create new and innovative ways to learn, form partnerships and build on a campus atmosphere that made anyone connected to the university feel they were a part of something big.

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Marilyn Karnig was a study in doing.
The sculptor

Like an artist with his material, Albert Karnig worked to refine the piece in progress that was Cal State San Bernardino.

by Koren Wetmore

When Albert Karnig took the helm as Cal State San Bernardino’s third president in 1997, he set his sights on the future and developed a strategic plan. A key component of that plan — to build the campus’s physical and intellectual environment — would establish the infrastructure needed for success.

Karnig approached his task with an entrepreneurial vision, that innate ability to assess the reality, dream the potential and achieve the impossible. And, under his leadership, CSUSB grew, despite the economic forces that challenged it.

“I liken the work of Dr. Karnig to that of a master sculptor. The academic stone put in place by his predecessors was of high quality, but rough hewn,” said San Bernardino Mayor Patrick Morris. “He had an unerring sense of how this stone must be shaped to meet the educational needs of a region whose population was exploding in numbers and diversity, but had little contact with higher education and the great opportunities that [one can] obtain with a college and post-graduate experience.”
In the past 15 years, Karnig’s academic sculpture gave rise to 13 new buildings, including construction of the satellite Palm Desert Campus, which was built entirely without state funds.

“Dr. Karnig was key in our building a permanent Palm Desert campus. He made regular trips to the desert for meetings to support the entitling and construction, provided clout and credibility to the finance campaign, and assisted in the closing of several major gifts,” said Richard Oliphant, former Indian Wells mayor and co-leader of the campaign that brought the satellite campus to the Coachella Valley. “It could not have been built without him.”

The campus’s construction was funded by more than $40 million raised during Karnig’s tenure. It broke ground on its first structure, the Mary Stuart Rogers Gateway Building, in 2000 and eventually grew to include the Indian Wells Theater, the Indian Wells Center for Educational Excellence and the Palm Desert Health Sciences Building.

About the same time, the San Bernardino campus experienced its own growth spurt.

The College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Building opened in August 2002, consolidating the college’s nine departments into one five-story, 135,635-square-foot building. Funds for the $32.8 million project came from a 1998 voter-approved education bond issue. The university’s third residence hall opened that same month, expanding the number of on-campus student beds to more than 1,000.

More student housing followed after the acquisition in July 2004 of 11 acres, located across the street from the campus. The University Village apartment-style complex added another 480 student beds.

The Chemical Sciences Building, completed in the winter of 2006, added 37,500 square feet of lecture and lab space, along with a museum, to the College of Natural Sciences.

The 2008 opening of the $50 million College of Education Building gave a physical home not only to classrooms, offices and a literacy center, but also to the university’s first doctoral program in education. Funds from Prop. 55, a statewide school-repair and construction bond passed in 2004, covered the building’s construction cost, but not its $4 million in furnishings and equipment. Those funds came from donations raised through the university’s Tools for Education campaign, a community-wide effort that included faculty, staff and private donors, and supported largely by Watson and Associates.

Like other projects that followed — such as the development of a student recreation and fitness center and the expansion of the Santos Manuel Student Union — fund-raising...
and community support proved vital. It was a concept that Karnig enthusiastically embraced.

“[President Karnig] would be the first to tell you that it is a very team-oriented environment at Cal State (San Bernardino). But being able to get everybody to rally around a vision and get everyone on the campus to play their role and work toward it, that is really his strength,” said 1994 CSUSB graduate and CSU Trustee Lou Monville.

The newest academic addition was to the Physical Sciences Building, which originally opened in 1967 but unveiled its renovated facilities in 2011. The $27 million structure houses 21 classrooms, laboratories, faculty offices and a student services center. A few months later, the grand opening of the $2-million Murillo Family Observatory rounded out more than a decade of visible campus growth.

And, as the campus grew, so did the number of students. Enrollment steadily rose from about 13,000 students in 1997 to more than 17,000 today. Further, the student population continues to reflect the cultural and economic diversity of the communities the university serves.

“CSUSB has grown from being merely a commuter school to a mélange of student backgrounds whose diversity brings out the best in one another,” said Stuart Sumida, professor of biology. “Dr. Karnig has helped to encourage and facilitate that diversity.”

He’s also opened access to higher education for a generation of students that otherwise may not have dreamed such opportunities were possible.

“I’m very pleased that we could more than double our freshman class, double our enrollment of historically under-represented students, and graduate classes in which 70 percent of the students were the first in their families to graduate from college,” President Karnig said. “I was delighted to be president while so much building and student growth was taking place.”

What’s perhaps most amazing is that the campus’s growth — in enrollment and facilities — happened during one of the state’s most difficult economic times. As funding for education became a shrinking line item in the state’s budget, Karnig rallied the CSUSB community to make tough decisions. His success in doing so has been credited directly to his open communication style.

“He desires to bring folks around a table to tackle challenges head on and to give them an opportunity to give advice,” Monville said. “Universities are living, complex institutions. So having a team that thinks ahead and is willing to make tough decisions, while understanding the importance of putting the needs of students first, creates an environment that allows the institution to get through tough times.”

A combination of revenue bonds, federal funds, community support and tireless fundraising helped to meet many a budget gap. But CSUSB’s continued success was equally ensured by Karnig’s steadfast commitment to the university, its students and faculty, and the communities it serves.

“With the pressures on Dr. Karnig to cut services, he could have easily put a pencil line through the Palm Desert Campus, creating a huge savings,” said Oliphant. “Instead, he underlined it.”
To serve a community

The university’s mission goes well beyond providing a top education

by Koren Wetmore

Leading a major academic institution is by no means a one-man operation. Nor is serving the communities that surround it.

No man has understood this more clearly than Cal State San Bernardino President Albert Karnig.

“Al Karnig brought a leadership style that matched perfectly with the times. His handshake was firm and strong, and his warm smile was contagious to all who would meet him,” said Jack Brown, president and CEO of Stater Bros. Markets and an adjunct business professor at CSUSB.

“He had a vision to reach out to the communities served by Cal State.”

During his 15-year tenure, Karnig forged partnerships with educational, business, community and civic leaders that have benefitted everyone involved — especially future generations of students and residents.

“Karnig gathered around him associates who shared his vision,” said San Bernardino Mayor Patrick Morris. “He empowered them and together they became educational crusaders ...”

Patrick Morris, mayor, San Bernardino

with fundraising campaigns. Today, the university has established more than 500 community partnerships, including ones with 59 school districts, and 29 research and service centers focused on issues such as water, economics, education, indigenous peoples, health disparities, criminal justice, child development and Middle Eastern and Islamic studies.

Many of the centers bring needed services, such as literacy and business training, while offering students opportunities to apply their acquired skills and knowledge in a real-world context. Others provide policy analysis and research resources to address issues common to the Inland Empire.

Three of the centers — the Leonard Transportation Center, the Water Resources Institute and the Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship — are prime examples of Karnig’s entrepreneurial approach, said CSU Trustee Lou Monville. “He pro-
provided a leadership role and harnessed the powers of the institution to better the region while giving a hands-on, strong educational experience for students,” he said.

Karnig also encouraged opportunities for diverse students to access and excel in higher education.

“When Dr. Karnig arrived, there were sweeping demographic changes occurring,” said state Assemblymember Wilmer Amina Carter. “He accommodated these changes in many ways, including establishing the university as a Hispanic-serving institution, participating in Black Church Sundays for CSU presidents, yearly Native American week on campus, and other groundbreaking programs.”

CSUSB now boasts a 46 percent Hispanic student population, and the number of African-American and Asian students also is on the rise. The university also made the Top 200 list of colleges for Native Americans. Community outreach and scholarship programs have also opened doors for students and families underserved in the past. Now, 70 percent of CSUSB graduates are the first in their families to finish college.

“He clearly sees the importance of reaching out to all segments of our diverse community and has built bridges between the university and the region’s educational institutions, businesses and community groups,” said Gary Thomas, San Bernardino County superintendent of schools.

Just as Karnig invited participation in CSUSB’s goals, he and his wife Marilyn enthusiastically served within the community.

“He made it a point to attend district superintendent meetings to address K-12-related issues and, as an executive board member of the Alliance for Education, worked with the county schools’ office and business leaders to promote partnerships to bring rigor and relevance to the classroom, and produce a higher-skilled workforce for the region,” Thomas said.

Karnig serves on the boards of several organizations, including Inland Action, the Inland Empire Economic Partnership and Community Hospital of San Bernardino. Marilyn Karnig serves with nonprofits such as Childhelp and is a board member for the San Bernardino Symphony.

Honors for Karnig’s community involvement include the 2007 Honorary Black Rose Award from the San Bernardino Black Culture Foundation and Congressman Joe Baca’s Community Leadership Award for Outstanding Service and Dedication to the Community. Both Karnigs were honored by the San Bernardino YWCA with its 2006 Humanitarians of the Year award.

The university itself has also received recognition. For the past six consecutive years, CSUSB has been named to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, the highest honor a college or university can receive for its commitment to volunteering, service-learning and civic engagement.

Achieving such honors and results requires teamwork and a community willing to collaborate for the common good. It’s a concept nurtured during his tenure and one Karnig hopes will prove a lasting legacy. “Because, in the last analysis,” he said, “the university exists for the students and the region we serve.”
The joy in knowledge

To Albert Karnig, the effort to raise the hopes and expectations of the San Bernardino and Riverside region was inextricably linked to teaching and learning that reached for the brightest star.

by Koren Wetmore

His sights set on academic excellence, Albert Karnig fostered an environment that unlocked students’ potential along with their access to higher education.

Not only could they acquire a quality college education — thanks to scholarships, talented faculty and an expanded academic program — but also accomplish amazing things once they got there.

“We aren’t Harvard or Yale, but I will match our best students with the best anywhere. And I mean anywhere,” said biology professor Stuart Sumida. “I’ve taken our students into the field doing paleontological field work with graduate and undergraduate students from the University of Chicago and undergrads from the Claremont Colleges, and our students were in all measures their equals or better.”

Karnig encouraged such academic rigor through the creation of a variety of new degree programs. In his 15 years as CSUSB president, the university saw the development of its first doctoral program in education, master’s degree programs in visual arts and creative writing and bachelor’s degree programs in computer engineering, environmental science, bioinformatics and social work.

During his watch the quality of many academic programs gained national recognition. In 2006, CSUSB’s graduate entrepreneurship program was ranked fourth in the nation by The Princeton Review and Entrepreneur magazine. In 2008, the university became one of only two in the 23-campus California State University system (and only the seventh public or private California institution) to be certified as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Education. The College of Business and Public Administration was named in 2010 as one of the four most innovative business schools in the nation by European CEO magazine.

Making such quality programs affordable for students proved one of Karnig’s greatest joys.

“He was the first in his family to go to college and I think he believes deeply that the mission of the university is to provide access for talented students, regardless of their means,” said Andrew Bodman, CSUSB provost and vice president for academic affairs. “[Karnig] has been instrumental in working with donors to provide scholarships across the university, and now there are more than a hundred different scholarship funds available for CSUSB students.”

Among them is the President’s Academic Excellence Scholarship that Karnig created in 2002. Offered to students who are in the top 1 percent of
Audra Wise was not among them. Odd, thought President Karnig. This should be her fourth and final year at Cal State San Bernardino, and it concerned him that Audra, one of the founding six university President’s Academic Excellence Scholarship recipients, would be unregistered.

Albert Karnig had launched the PAES program in 2002. The program was a concerted and ambitious effort to draw the top 1 percent of all San Bernardino County high school graduates to CSUSB and, ideally, make their ties to the community strong enough to inspire them to stay in the region after taking their degrees. It offered full rides to these top students, some of whom would have a difficult time affording college without the scholarship.

Karnig had come to know Audra’s family, and when he asked how she was, he learned that, in fact, the reason she wasn’t in school was because she had already graduated from CSUSB — in three years — and was now at Loma Linda University School of Medicine, fully engaged in the next phase of her dream to become a doctor.

PAES, as much as any new academic program or building, has been a hallmark — and passion — of Albert Karnig’s presidency.

Every year, Karnig and his wife, Marilyn, hold a brunch at the Karnig home for PAES students. “He was just really proud to call us PAES scholars,” said Chelsey Jones, a junior and current member of the CSUSB women’s soccer team, “and he really wanted to see us be successful in our lives.”

But PAES has not been merely about rewarding accomplishment gained through intelligence.

“Raise your hand if you think you’re a good student, because you’re generally smarter than other people,” Karnig will ask PAES scholars en masse when he meets them. Maybe one obliges. Then he asks, “Do you think you’re on scholarship and stronger students because you work harder?” This time everyone raises their hand.

The students get it.

“If you’re going to be successful,” Karnig said, “it’s because you work harder and you work smarter, you

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their high school graduating class, the scholarship covers student fees and is renewable for four years, and today provides up to $25,000 in educational funds. More than 300 students have accepted the PAES since the program began. Yet the program’s impact extends beyond that statistic.

“These students bring their friends to campus, many of which are as academically talented as they are,” said Rob Carlson, former CSUSB dean of the College of Natural Sciences, who played an integral part in attracting PAES scholars to campus. “PAES scholars have also demonstrated a level of success in the individual classes that has often increased the overall success of the students enrolled.”

While the PAES and other scholarships attracted students to campus, it was the supportive environment Karnig inspired that helped them to thrive. “Many students arrive with less-than-optimal reading and mathematics preparation. However, the nurturing atmosphere that President Karnig espouses results in very talented faculty and staff working to optimize that learning process,” Carlson said.

In fact, 90 percent of the students requiring remediation in math, English or both receive it within one year of entering the university. With so much support, once the students got on campus, they stayed. The university’s 89.1 percent first-to-second year retention rate ranks among the highest in the California State University system, Bodman said, and retention rates for African American and Hispanic students rank in the top three among the 23 CSU campuses.

And, if the recent figures from the Collegiate Learning Assessment are any indication, CSUSB is poised for continued success. Taken both freshmen and senior years, CLA tests determine students’ academic abilities upon entering college as compared to their performance in their senior year. It is used as a measurement tool nationwide to assess an academic institution’s contribution to students’ critical thinking, reasoning and writing skills.

The 2010-2011 CLA data showed a 25 percent rise in student scores from freshmen to senior year, placing CSUSB at the 96th percentile, or the top 4 percent in the nation for the degree of learning students acquired while in college.

Despite so many achievements during his tenure, Karnig remains humble and attributes the campus’s success to a dedicated faculty and staff. His hope is that their focus on academic excellence will continue well into the future, unhindered by financial concerns.

“The tradeoff between limited budgets and academic excellence has been and will be an ongoing challenge,” he said. “Despite recent increases in tuition fees, CSUSB is still one of the most affordable universities in the nation.”

— Sam Romero
The right home

She came to San Bernardino with energy to match a university, a town, a region passionate about giving back

By Carmen Murillo-Moyeda

When Marilyn Karnig was a registered nurse, wife and mother of three, she didn’t realize then that she was paving the way for a future role as the “First Lady” of Cal State San Bernardino.

“My wife … has a very checkered past,” said Albert Karnig with a grin. “She was a nurse while raising our children and putting me through school. At just 24 years old, she was the spokeswoman for the hospital nursing association. She later served as a psychiatric nurse at Texas Tech Med School and served in other roles.”

Choosing a new career path, Marilyn went back to college to obtain a bachelor’s degree in marketing at Arizona State University. Then she was a businesswoman running her own interior design business for a few years. After moving with her husband to the University of Wyoming, she was the university’s first college development officer — in the College of Engineering — and afterward she became coordinator of fund-raising for all the colleges there.

For the past 15 years at CSUSB, Marilyn has become in some ways as integral to campus life as her husband, CSUSB President Albert Karnig. Now, looking back at their time, she feels fortunate to have been a part of the university during a dynamic period of growth and achievement.

“Despite major budget challenges, I think we happened to serve the right university at the right time.”

When they arrived in San Bernardino in 1997, Marilyn immediately immersed herself in campus and local community life. “We like to attend theater productions, concerts, art exhibits, lectures and athletic events on campus, and always hoped that more students, faculty and staff would attend and see the value to being part of the life of the university.”

“Marilyn, as ‘First Lady’ of the university, has done a wonderful job serving as an advocate for the university, nurturing a culture of service to students, university and community,” said Larry Sharp, CSUSB’s vice president of university advancement. “Marilyn hasn’t just volunteered in the community, she has taken on the role of being a leader in the community. She is loved and respected by her colleagues in the...
community for all that she does to improve the quality of life for all of us. She has truly gone beyond what we would expect of a ‘First Lady.’"

For six years, Marilyn served on the board of Arrowhead United Way and as the organization’s campaign chair for a year and chair of the board for a term. Very early on, she became a member of the San Bernardino Symphony board and currently chairs the Endowment Committee. For many years, she’s been on the Symphony Guild Board, both as president and membership vice president. In addition, she has served on the Feldheym Library Foundation Board, the Hillside School Governance Council and has been involved with many other organizations.

“From all these boards,” she said, “I’ve learned that the San Bernardino region has a strong core of people who care very much about the community and work to preserve a cultural identity for the area, as well as seeking to assist those who are struggling in the face of difficult challenges.”

Some people are process oriented, and some can get things done. “Then there are people like my wife,” said her husband, “who can do both. She doesn’t just talk about it, she gets it done. That’s a very important facet of her personality.”

Mrs. Karnig has been highly active on campus as well, for example, serving on the Scholarship Campaign Board and the CSUSB Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art board.

“Marilyn joined RAFFMA’s advisory board in 1998 as its first member and loyally served the museum for 12 years,” said Eva Kirsch, director of the Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art. She’s always present and extremely supportive, and has helped the museum grow strong during her six consecutive terms. She is smart, open, honest and practical in her professional advisory role. And our birthdays are on the same date!”

Marilyn has seen her role as a partner to her husband by supporting and recognizing the efforts and achievements of students, faculty and staff. At home, she tries to do things that make it easier for her husband to do his job by managing their social and family obligations so that her husband doesn’t have to worry about that part of their lives.

“I have learned from my wife,” said President Karnig, “to cultivate and take delight in others’ successes. She is the type of person who derives great joy in the achievements of others and enjoys contributing to their success. I’ve watched her do that, and learned to derive the same kind of pleasure.”

But just as importantly, she also sees herself as an advocate for the university. “And to do that I must have a face and a place in the community,” she said.

Once they close this chapter on CSUSB, the Karnigs’ plans include more traveling. She’s thrilled at the thought of being able to plan a trip during the fall, which was never an option in the past. This fall, they’ll take a New England cruise — Montreal to New York City — to see the autumn colors and enjoy the company of friends who also love to travel. They will remain in San Bernardino. “This has become our home. We’ve grown to love it and feel we’ve had the opportunity to contribute to the viability of the surrounding area,” she said. “We’ve developed close friendships and we have many social and civic activities that we look forward to continuing.”

A few, however, won’t continue. “I’ll miss the opportunities we’ve had to meet so many different people and the activities we’ve taken part in because Al’s been president,” she said. “We’ve always enjoyed hosting students, faculty and staff, as well as the community in our home. I’m sure there will be lots more, but for certain, I’ll miss walking across campus and being greeted by so many friendly folks. This university has been wonderfully warm and welcoming from our first day, and I hope that marvelous spirit of camaraderie continues.” With a laugh and a wink, she says, “Did I mention missing my parking pass?”

Illustration, silver and glass exhibits at Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art
No two people could have been as Coyote blue as Albert and Marilyn Karnig. They loved their ‘Yotes. They cheered them and shared with them a few tears over 15 years. By every measure, they were the athletes’ No. 1 fans. For that, they received a special halftime honor at a basketball game on Feb. 11, 2012, from players and coaches, their families and fans in attendance. The honor included their names on two Coussoulis Arena seats, reserved for them in perpetuity.
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May

22 MUSIC CSUSB Jazz Combo with Vocal Jazz. 7:30 p.m. Performing Arts Recital Hall. General admission $11, senior citizens $9, students $6.

24 MUSIC CSUSB Jazz Ensemble. 7 p.m. Student Union Events Center. General admission $11, senior citizens $9, students $6.

31 MUSIC Spring Showcase featuring jazz artist Robert Kyle. 7:30 p.m. Performing Arts Recital Hall. General admission $17, senior citizens $13, CSUSB students $11.

June

1 MUSIC CSUSB Symphonic Band and Chamber Winds. 7:30 p.m. Performing Arts Recital Hall. General admission $11, senior citizens $9, students $6.

July

11 OUTDOOR CONCERTS: OPENING CSUSB’s Summer Wednesdays concert series. July 11, 18, 25, Aug. 1 and 8, 7 p.m., CSUSB Lower Commons. Free. Complimentary parking in Lot D. Conces-
sion stands available. Attendees welcome to bring food, lawn chairs, and blankets. (909) 537-7360.

1 THEATRE: OPENING NIGHT “Cabaret.” The affairs of love and war play out at a decadent German nightclub in 1929. June 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9 at 8 p.m. and June 3 and 10 at 2 p.m. CSUSB Barnes Theatre in Performing Arts Building. General admission: $15; senior citizens, CSUSB Alumni Association members: $12; current students with valid I.D.: $6.

5 MUSIC Music Tuesdays presents A Piano Trio. noon. Performing Arts Recital Hall. Free admission.

5 MUSIC CSUSB Chamber Singers. 7:30 p.m. Performing Arts Recital Hall. General admission $11, senior citizens $9, students $6.

9 MUSIC CSUSB Concert Choir. 7:30 p.m. Performing Arts Recital Hall. General admission $11, senior citizens $9, students $6.

11 MUSIC Student Chamber Music Concert. 7:30 p.m. Performing Arts Recital Hall. General admission $11, senior citizens $9, students $6.

15 ART EXHIBIT OPENING 42nd Annual Student Art Exhibition. Juried show of works by CSUSB student artists. RAFFMA. June 15-July 31. Museum hours Mon.-Wed. and Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Thurs. 10 a.m.-7 p.m., closed Fri. and Sun. Suggested donation $3.

CSUSB Jazz Fest featuring Manhattan Transfer, June 30

SPECIAL EVENT The Manhattan Transfer headlines second annual CSUSB Jazz Fest. 7 p.m. Coussoulis Arena at CSUSB. Opening acts feature CSUSB Jazz En-
semble and RCC Jazz Ensemble. Tickets go on sale May 4. $100 Gold Circle, $50 reserved (cen-
ter section), $35 reserved (side section) and $25 general admission. Tickets available at arena box office. Arena.csusb.edu. (909) 537-7360.