As one of the original faculty members of the Department of Political Science, Dr. Susan Shirk has been a part of the UC San Diego community for more than four decades. Her personal commitment to understanding how China works and in improving the relationship between the US and China have been the focus of her career as a scholar and foreign policy expert. She first visited China in 1971, and served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State with responsibility for policy toward China from 1997 to 2000.

In 2012, she established the 21st Century China Center at the School of Global Policy & Strategy (GPS) in collaboration with Dean Peter Cowhey and Professor Barry Naughton. The Center has become the country’s largest and most innovative social science research center on contemporary China as well as a think tank that serves as a catalyst for policy debates and contributes to government policies and business decisions toward China. As an integral part of this initiative, Dr. Shirk has devoted much of her time in recent years to donor stewardship and fundraising, both locally and across the globe.

Her insights, formed through a career-long focus on the subject, are invaluable in helping scholars and donors alike to better understand a very complex relationship, which is a great asset in the fundraising efforts of the 21st Century China Center.

Dedicated to connecting communities in the US and China, she enjoys the social aspects of bringing people together; hosting dinners and speaking at events with government officials, industry, and university partners. Dr. Shirk has a unique ability to personalize stewardship from individual members of the UC San Diego community to international foundations and corporations which seems to come naturally, and is described by Carol Hobson, Director of Foundation Relations, as a “wonderfully collaborative and creative partner, with a generosity toward development colleagues at the university as well as donor-partners.” Dr. Shirk describes her own development style as “extremely persistent.”

Dr. Shirk’s hope is that the honor of receiving this year’s Excellence in Stewardship Award will serve as an opportunity to increase donor awareness and excitement about the important work of the 21st Century China Center.
Speak to Victor Adrian Camacho, known to most as “A.C.,” for even a few minutes, and it is impossible not to share in the enthusiasm he feels for UC San Diego Health. Whether making sure every guest feels welcome, or giving a tour of Jacobs Medical Center, A.C. says, “We roll out the red carpet. We take care of every guest. Everyone is a VIP.” As a Supervisor in the Office of Experience Transformation for both JMC and Hillcrest Medical Center, his partnership with the UC San Diego Health Development team does not officially fall under his responsibilities, but A.C. believes that “we are all ambassadors of what we do at UC San Diego.”

His knowledge of the state-of-the-art facilities at JMC comes from A.C.’s experience on the team that opened the facility in 2016, an experience he describes as an honor. It made him the obvious choice when the development team was looking for somebody in the know to provide tours of the hospital. According to A.C., it all started with one conference call that led to “a really beautiful partnership.” Since then, he has led numerous tours, not one of them routine, and he says that the doctors, the donors, and his partners in development constantly provide new details to share in his tours noting, “You have to learn as you go.”

A.C. thinks of himself as a facilitator when he is giving tours, making connections, which he can do thanks to the relationships he has built within the hospital and throughout the community. He understands what makes stewardship so important, and believes that donors see how their “gifts change lives.” In his nomination for this 2018 Excellence in Stewardship Award, A.C. is commended for inspiring philanthropy, which he views as the best outcome of his efforts. He says, “Charity solves the problem right in front of you, philanthropy will go on for a long time.”

A.C. says what he likes best about his job is that “Every day is different, a brand new day here at UC San Diego.” His appreciation for new beginnings runs deep. As he guides visitors through Neonatal Intensive-Care Unit (NICU), where the smallest of UC San Diego Health’s patients sleep, he slows his pace, pausing to read each baby’s name. Later, A.C.’s face lights up with pure joy as the soft sound of chimes playing Brahms’ Lullaby begins. He smiles broadly, and says, “A baby is just born.”