New dean of San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus speaks

By ROMAN FLORES, Staff Writer

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CALEXICO — As about 150 transfer students gathered information about San Diego State University's Imperial Valley campus, they were not alone in being new to SDSU.

SDSU-IV's new dean, David Pearson, has made his way from Brownsville, Texas to the Imperial Valley to take on the vacant position left by Dean Stephen Roeder's recent retirement.

Pearson — who brings along his three sociology degrees from University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Yale University — is keen on using his experiences from the border area of Brownsville in the Valley, which, he says, is very similar in many ways.

"University of Brownsville is a place right on the border, right on the Rio Grande," Pearson said of his former university. "It was a purely Hispanic culture. Our student population tended to be somewhat older than the average student (and) predominantly first-generation college students, just like here.

"It's hot in south Texas and I discovered it's hot here," Pearson laughed. "It's a little drier, pero estoy en casa," he said, casually breaking into Spanish as part of his regular speech.

Before coming to SDSU, Pearson was most recently the vice president for partnership affairs at University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College since 2007. He has served on the faculty advisory council, was president of the academic senate and was co-director of a dual language certification program while at UTB/TSC.

Also, he has also taught sociology at UTB/TSC, Lafayette College, Southern Connecticut State University and Yale University. He has also made a number of appearances on radio and television including ABC's "Nightline," CNN's "Headline News" and "The Larry King Show" and served in the U.S. Army in the 1970s.

Though Pearson has never been a dean, "I know what deans do, and what I don't know I'll figure out," he quickly interjected with a chuckle.

Dean Pearson commented on the various factors of his new job, including meeting students' needs, working with the community, fundraising and making resources readily available for students.

He said bringing courses offered at SDSU's main campus to the Imperial Valley is a step he hopes to take.

"My major aspiration as the new dean here is to try precisely to make those opportunities available," he said. "We'll bring in perhaps new faculty, new majors and so on to our campus … our students (will) experience a variety of media and mechanisms."
“We need the community for its input, we need volunteers … we’re part of the community,” he continued. “The community needs to know who we are and that we’re here. We’re part of the town as much as Wal-Mart or Denny’s.”

All in all, Dean Pearson just seemed happy to be here at last.

“It was a singular honor to be selected as a dean of the Imperial Valley campus,” Pearson said.

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