Interim Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs William “Dr. D” DeGraffenreid has witnessed more than 30 Sacramento State commencement ceremonies and says it “never gets old.”

“Our graduation ceremonies are joyous occasions,” said DeGraffenreid. “About a third of our students every year are the first person in their families to graduate from college. So, it is a day that is significant not just for the student, but their entire family.”

DeGraffenreid came to Sacramento State in 2002, teaching in the Department of Physics and Astronomy before moving into administrative roles. He’s stayed after all these years, he said, because “I love my students.”

“It’s a community where our students are looking to improve themselves, their communities, and families; and that means something to me,” he said.

DeGraffenreid, who attended a Southern California high school where classmates represented 40 different countries, says he also appreciates Sacramento State students because of their diversity. “You hear so many different languages being spoken when you walk through campus and the different types of music being played. It’s just so heartwarming.”

In addition to being the motivation behind his career, DeGraffenreid says Sacramento State students also inspire his giving. He currently supports research activities for undergraduate physics and astronomy students. And together with his wife, they support emergency student aid.

“Even when we give to emergency services and we don’t necessarily see the individual who we are impacting, we still know we are making a tremendous difference in a student’s life,” he said. “I care very deeply for the students at Sac State.”

DeGraffenreid acknowledges that philanthropic giving at a public university may be somewhat of a “paradigm shift” but borne out of necessity. “The trend for public higher education is that the amount of resources coming to institutions has been reducing over time, yet the needs of our students and faculty continue to grow. Something has to give.”

If faculty, staff, or administrators need a little inspiration in donating, DeGraffenreid says, just remember commencement. “Anyone who works at Sac State knows the value of a college degree and the impact it has for our students.”

“The trend for public higher education is that the amount of resources coming to institutions has been reducing over time, yet the needs of our students and faculty continue to grow. Something has to give. If we want to continue to support our students, giving is a way we can do that.”

—William DeGraffenreid

Philanthropy ranges from research to basic needs for William DeGraffenreid.