

# Sebesta loves finding answers to students' questions

**By Travis Gulbrandson**  
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The chair of USD's department of history has been named the 2012 recipient of the monsignor James Doyle Humanities Teaching Award, and she said she couldn't feel more honored.

"When I came to USD, Father Doyle ... was teaching, and he was an outstanding teacher," said Judith Sebesta, Ph.D. He had students wait-listed for his courses, and he would regularly enroll over 100 students, depending upon how large a classroom we had available at the time. So he had a tremendous reputation among the students for his teaching.

"So, to be given an award in his name is an extremely great honor," she said.

Named for the university's former chair of

religious studies, the award is given annually to an outstanding teacher in the Humanities Division of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Sebesta was honored with the award and \$500 at the 2012 Phi Beta Kappa initiation/Lifto Amundson Lecture on March 29.

A Chicago native, Sebesta has been teaching at USD since February 1972.

"I was appointed as a professor of classics, and my

teaching responsibilities have been primarily in Latin, and then also in classical humanities, which has included art and archeology courses, also medical terminology courses, classical mythology, ancient Egypt, women in Antiquity," Sebesta said.

She is co-editor of The On-line Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women, is the executive secretary of the National Committee for

Latin and Greek, is co-editor of "The World of Roman Costume" and co-author of "The Worlds of Roman Women."

These subjects have long held an interest for her.

"I got interested in this when I was in seventh grade and read some stories of Norse mythology in our seventh-grade reader, which spurred me to take out a book on mythology, and it turned out it had Norse and classical mythology, and that's where it all started," she said.

Sebesta earned her BA in classics from the University of Chicago, and went on to get her Ph.D. in the same subject from Stanford University in 1972.

When she's not teaching, Sebesta said she enjoys gardening and weaving. She also loves to read history, biographies, historical mysteries and books on early



Christianity.

She said she most enjoys interacting with her students and answering their questions.

"After a number of years of teaching, you hear (the same questions) each year, but they're always new because the students are so

interested in learning," Sebesta said. "And there are also those new ones. I really love it when they have questions for which I don't know the answer, because then I get to go and search for it and try to find it out. And that's always fun."

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