

USD

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years ago. It was kind of ratty looking 15 years ago but that's my opinion. Abbott has a great interest in having the place look good and it looks much better than it did back then."

The move to NCAA Division I sports has helped the school's profile even more.

"The change to Division I athletics has elevated the whole campus," Muenster said. "There is a sense that the whole institution has elevated. I was skeptical at first, but I think it's a net positive."

The move to big-time athletics has increased the USD image.

"The move to Division I has done one thing in my mind and that is make the University of South Dakota more well known," Susan Tuve, senior director of planned giving at USD, said. "We have more students coming in from out of the state. We have gone out and sought athletes from other parts of the country and I think today the level and quality of our athletes is higher."

"Playing athletics at a higher level has helped us academically."

With a growing image and sports model in place, Abbott sees more for his school in the near future.

"I'd like to see us have the strongest program in everything we offer," he said. "I would like to see our students have the ability to think critically and be able to solve problems. Hopefully, we provide students with the tools to make a reasonable living, but also assist them to figure out for themselves what their place is in the world."

"It's not enough to make a living, there needs to be more than that. I'd like our students to leave here thinking they can really make a difference and can cause change. That they have a duty to make the better place than it was when they got here."

(SUB) A Time of Y2K and Student Shootings

Kids were dying on campuses, be it secondary schools or on college campuses.

The 90s were about grunge rock and rise of hip hop music.

It was also about more young people feeling angry enough to kill others.

But in between all of that a Coyote found a way to have fun.

"I tell you it was fun," Rory Triplett, a 2000 graduate and former Coyote football player, said about his days at USD and Dakota Days. "It's like they say, college is what you make of it. I was able to go to college at a time where I was able to make

some good friends and teammates. I lived in Vermillion for many years before going to USD because my dad coached football in town. So I was able to experience Dakota Days then and then later as a student.

"When I went there in the 90s Dakota Days was always highlighted. I was amazed with how packed Vermillion got during that week. There was always something going on. When we showed up at the game the Dome was packed. Those are memories that really stand out and today it is no different."

Triplett, who lives in Iowa City, Iowa and works as a commercial insurance producer, was at USD when the Columbine High School (Colorado) shootings occurred.

"Everyone stopped and was fixated on the coverage," he said. "It was somber here and like with any tragic event the reporting everybody was fixated on that and the security was increased and people were more cautious. Like everything else it wears off and we moved forward and looked to more positive things."

Some of that positive came in the lunacy of the Y2K scare.

"When people talked about it people started getting nervous about it," Triplett said. "But with all the fun distractions we did not concentrate on the Y2K paranoia. It was a 'sky is falling' thought about the turning over from the 20th century."

Triplett is still an avid follower of what goes on at his alma mater.

"I do follow what's going on and it's been interesting these past five, six years the transition to Division I, that's been fun to follow," he said. "How the university continues to grow and prosper. Every time I go back I notice all the improvements and changes and that makes it all the worthwhile to go back to."

(sub) The destruction of the Twin Towers

On Sept. 11, 2001, the nation was struck with fear as the Twin Towers in New York City fell at the hands of a vicious attack by terrorists.

That part we all know. Some here at USD, including Dr. Randall Quevillion, chairman of the psychology department at the school since 1991, was a volunteer for Red Cross.

"I was on call and essentially the Red Cross had at that time which were a critical response team that were to be ready for major casualty disasters," Quevillion said. "I was on the second team - the backup. So as soon as the events happened I contacted the Red Cross and they said it was such a big event that I would be up in a very short time. So I basically headed out of town."

He and his team drove to Omaha and the Red Cross rented a car for them to

drive to New York with all planes still grounded.

He returned to Vermillion two weeks later.

"Trying to get a sense of it, one of the things of course was that consciousness was on the air so much that it was the first time that America had been openly attacked," Quevillion said. "I certainly feel that there was a sense of this was an attack on America and that this was happening to all of us. We were thinking about the possibility of other attacks."

"It was a frequent topic of conversation. It became one of the major topics in the disaster classes and the terrorist aspect content became much more prevalent after that."

(sub) As time goes by

Maren Colon, a 2009 graduate living in Washington D.C. and working as a government relations coordinator enjoyed her times as a Coyote.

"It was probably the best experience ever," she said. "My mother's family is originally from Vermillion and so I would come up and spend time with my family and would watch Dakota Days (before she attended the school). It was a sense of coming home to me when I was living in Sioux Falls."

"A lot of my friends come back and it's a big reunion for us. It is our time together and chance to cherish and remember our time together. It's a great reunion of alums and current students coming together to celebrate the joys of being a Coyote."

Colon attended college as social media exploded with MYSPACE and FACEBOOK exploding onto the scene and Twitter was looming as a soon-to-be major player in the world today.

It was Google and Netflix. The increased importance of movies on cable and ESPN's competition bringing more sports to the table.

The last 10 years alone have had at least 50 years' worth of crazy.

"It brought a lot of change," Colon said. "Laptops, cell phones, and then Facebook changed the face of college. Social media and technology was coming together on a lot of fronts where you had access to a lot of information. I think I was one of the first to get Facebook at USD."

"I was a lot more vocal on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. You choose what you put out there and some parts of my life I chose to keep more private. Younger generations don't understand the implications

of some of their actions they put out there."

(sub) Youth of today and what they face

"When I graduated it never occurred to me what I was going to do, there were jobs around me and I was just having a good time," Muenster, who graduated in 1962, said. "It was a whole different world."

It is a world where students from the Pacific and Atlantic coasts now find themselves attending the USD and taking in its benefits.

But it may not be as easy as 1862 during the school's first days or even 1914 when the first Dakota Days occurred.

"I think kids today have many more pressures on them and are regulated more than we were," Tuve said. "I am probably out of the last generation that knew cheap gas and were more naive. I think with Facebook today I don't think kids are motivated to find out what's going on with the rest of the world and around them. Some are, but more kids have more pressure on them about their future."

Tuve lived in an age when she was allowed to get herself ready for the real world after graduating college and had to move out of her parents' home pronto.

"There was no time to find yourself, but you didn't plan out your life," she said. "You took what was available and worked your way up. Kids today? They have more debt and they are graduating with much more debt and I think that creates some problems and they aren't able to find the jobs they want."

"I don't think kids believe they are going to get to where their parents are anytime soon. They realize it's a tougher slog."

But when things get tough, they will have USD and Dakota Days to come home to.

That's saying something.

The Plain Talk presented the ultimate celebration of the 2014 Dakota Days in the 10/10/14 Plain Talk Heritage Edition! Keep reading...

The Plain Talk would also like to thank the USD Alumni Association for all its helping in making this project possible.

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