

UCSD Professor Nathan Fletcher Brings His Political Experience to the Classroom

BY RACHEL UDA SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Much of former politician Nathan Fletcher's appeal is that he is not a career politician. And now, the former assemblyman, Marine Corps veteran and current Qualcomm director has assumed another hat — as UCSD's first professor of practice.

Fletcher — an Ironman triathlete with hair slicked back in Gordon Gekko fashion — admires the UCSD campus from his new third-floor office in the Social Sciences Building, one of the perks of the post. After losing the San Diego mayoral election, the man profiled by news outlets around the country for his controversial jump from Republican to Independent and, now, Independent to Democrat, has still proven himself in high demand.

Fletcher stepped into the newly created position of professor of practice this past winter quarter and joined the political science department, co-teaching a class on "California Government and Politics." This quarter, Fletcher is teaching "How to Win (or Lose) an Election," a subject in which the former mayoral candidate is well-versed. In 2012, Fletcher finished third in the San Diego mayoral election behind Republican nominee Carl DeMaio.

"[Professor Thad Kousser and I] had talked about teaching on and off for about seven years," Fletcher said. "So when I lost the mayor's race, Thad and the [Dean of Social Sciences Jeff Elman] reached out and told me we had a new professor of practice position and it's for someone who has experience in a field and brings that to augment the coursework. And of course, I was really excited to accept."

Fletcher lends his varied experience to the course, working closely with students to place them with internships and employers.



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"We've placed a lot of students already with internships at campaigns or for elected officials," Fletcher said. "I've been able to talk to a student, understand their passion, make the connection and get them some relevant experience."

Fletcher only teaches part-time — once a week on Thursday nights — as he also serves as the senior director of corporate development for the San Diego-based tech company Qualcomm.

Both positions can be seen as a break from the past.

Midway through the 2012 mayoral campaign, Fletcher lost

the sponsorship of the San Diego County Republican Party to runner-up Carl DeMaio. Two weeks later, he announced his resignation from the GOP to run as an Independent. Understandably, Fletcher caught heat for his move, but he was largely forgiven by way of his more moderate tendencies.

But on May 4, the former assemblyman announced via Facebook his decision to switch from Independent to Democrat.

"At the end of the day, the Democratic Party is the party I believe in — the one that best reflects my values," Fletcher said. "My beliefs

and my principles haven't changed, but the party that best can turn that into a reality can change. I think over the past 10 years, the party has moved considerably to the right, with the influence of the Tea Party. And so, in a lot of ways, the Republican Party left me."

When asked about possible critical reception, Fletcher responded that he was not going to let criticism get in the way of doing what he thought was right.

"You'll be criticized for whatever you do," Fletcher said. "But I think the real test of character is seeing if someone will do what they need

to do in spite of criticism. If you let potential criticism be your guidepost for the decisions you make, that's not being true to your convictions or who you are."

Fletcher has signed on to teach at UCSD through June 2015 and has no current plans to run for office.

"I don't have any plans right now," Fletcher said. "I really enjoy teaching. I enjoy my work at Qualcomm, and I enjoy spending time with my family and surfing occasionally with my buddies. So life is pretty good."

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