A Closer Look: 
UC Irvine

By DEBRA BEYER
Special Advertising Sections Writer

Victor Koman is happy to be an “Extension lifer.”

Since learning about the University of California Irvine Extension program nearly 10 years ago, Koman has earned three certificates in advanced software, appraisal studies in fine and decorative arts and connoisseurship of fine and decorative arts. And he’s just getting warmed up.

“With all they have to offer at UCI, I could literally be a lifelong student,” said Koman, a 50-something Web-application developer for Boeing. “The catalog is fascinating and so many courses interest me, from screenwriting to photography to languages. I want to take them all.”

Founded in 1965, the University of California, Irvine, combines the strengths of a major research university with an incomparable Southern California location. With a commitment to research, teaching, learning and creativity, UCI is committed to innovation and discovery that benefits local, national and global communities, according to a university spokesman.

With more than 25,000 students, 1,800 faculty members and 8,600 staff, UCI is among the fastest-growing campuses in the University of California system. UCI is also a popular campus among new nearby satellite locations. With more than 35,000 students enrolled a year, the Extension program is also reaching a nationwide and global audience with an extensive offering of online courses and custom programs.

The school is the county’s second-largest employer and offers 76 undergraduate degree programs and 49 master’s degrees, an M.D., an Ed.D. and 43 Ph.D. programs. Graduates include three Pulitzer Prize and three Nobel Prize winners. This reputation helps attract students to the extended learning programs, especially since most are taught by current and past UCI professors and experts in the various fields.

Instructor quality and course offerings attracted Leah Jordan to UCI, too. She found what she was looking for in the school’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, an organization geared primarily toward retired and semi-retired adults and the baby boomer generation.

“I learned about the program through a friend and was enamored with all the classes offered — it really runs the gamut,” said Jordan, 70, who lives in Irvine.

“And with the high-caliber teaching staff, they are not just ‘how-to’ classes, but are very academic and taught with passion and intensity and fun.”

The institute provides university-level classes for those who wish to continue learning without having to deal with tests or grades. It offers more than 65 courses annually under the headings of arts and humanities, science and mathematics and social sciences. For the past five years, Jordan has taken Osher courses in everything from literature and opera to travel sketching and astronomy.

“This has really filled a great void. I could have gone back to college to get another degree but I wanted to learn for the sake of learning. I’m able to share and talk with friends with new knowledge that piques interesting conversations.”

Debra Beyer is a freelance writer based in Glendale.