

## San José State University Emeritus Faculty Association Biography

**Name:** Vida Carmen Kenk

**Department:** Biological Sciences

**Academic Rank:** Professor

**Year Retired:** 2006; FERP until 2010

**City of Residence:** Camp Connell, CA



**Facebook Page or Website URL:**

**Birthplace:** San Juan, Puerto Rico

**Birth Year:** 1939

**Marital Status:** married

**Spouse or Partner's Name:** William J. Minkel

**Children's Names:** Christopher Merlin Minkel y Kenk; Lauren Ada Minkel y Kenk

**No. of Grandchildren:** 0

**No. of Great Grandchildren:** 0

**Colleges or Universities Attended:**

College of William and Mary

**Year**

1961

**Degree**

B.S. Biology

Harvard University

1966

Ph.D.  
Biology

**Teaching Experience:**

SJSU

**From**

1966

**To**

2010

**Administrative, Business, or Professional Experience (other than teaching):**

Associate Dean, College of Science 1999 - 2004

Interim Dean, College of Science 2004 - 2006

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### **Personal Commentary (please limit comments to one page):**

I came to SJSU in 1966, shortly after the development of the California Master Plan for higher education that made California a model for the nation. I wanted to teach at an institution that emphasized affordable, high quality education for students who were often the first in their families to attend college. During my time at SJSU, I estimate that about 20,000 students were in my classes. Some of these students became friends with whom I still correspond. I enjoyed my colleagues in the Biology Department, which felt like an extended family. During my time at SJSU, I got married, went through two pregnancies, and raised a family. Conversations students had with me revealed that I served as a role model for young women in the sciences, who wanted to know how they could lead a balanced life. I told them to choose their husbands carefully, so that they would share housekeeping and parenting. My research involved mussels; I had the honor to name the species found living at hydrothermal vents in the Galapagos Rift Zone at more than two miles ocean depth. I owe my happy professional life to my husband, Bill Minkel, and to several significant mentors: Fanny Rinn (who nurtured a generation of women faculty), Joe Young and Lee Dorosz (chairs of the Biology Department), and Gerry Selter (Dean of the College of Science, and later Provost of SJSU). I retired fully in July, 2010, and moved to the Sierra at the 5000' level near Calaveras Big Trees State Park, where Bill and I serve as volunteers, sharing our love of nature with park visitors.

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