

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB PROFESSOR ELECTED TO NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Michael S. Witherell, professor of physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences, one of 60 new members and 15 foreign associates, in recognition of distinguished and continuing achievements in original research.

"I am thrilled to learn of Dr. Witherell's election to this elite group of scientists," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "This prestigious award brings to seven the number of faculty members in our outstanding physics department who are members of the National Academy of Sciences. I am proud to be his colleague at UCSB, a truly world-class institution."

"Election to the NAS is probably the greatest honor that can be given to an American scientist, with the exception of the Nobel Prize," said Rollin J. Morrison, chair of the department of physics at UCSB. "It is particularly gratifying for us that Mike Witherell came here as an assistant professor in 1981 and has done all of the work for which he was just recognized while at UCSB."

Morrison said that through Witherell's intellect and leadership the UCSB High Energy Physics group is now recognized as one of the very best in the country. UCSB's department of physics was cited by the National Research Council as tenth among all U.S. universities.

Witherell works with particle accelerators, to gain new insights into the fundamental building blocks of nature. In 1985 he headed a group at UCSB that was involved in an experiment at Fermilab in Illinois which provided the most precise measurements of the properties of a fundamental class of particles called charmed particles, so-called because they contain charmed or heavy quarks. For that work, Witherell received the American Physical Society's W.K.H. Panofsky Prize for Particle Physics in 1990.

Currently Witherell has a project at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) intended to understand the difference between matter and antimatter. "We know that at the big bang there were equal amounts of matter and anti-matter," said Witherell. "But the universe today is all made of matter. We want to know--where did all the anti-matter go?" This current experiment will start taking data in 1999, and is in a race with KEK, the Japanese Particle Physics Laboratory.

Witherell received his Ph.D. in 1973 from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and began teaching at Princeton University in that year. In 1981 he joined the faculty at UCSB. Witherell is also chair of the High Energy Physics Advisory Panel which advises the U.S. Department of Energy.

The National Academy of Sciences is a private organization of scientists and engineers dedicated to the furtherance of science. The Academy was established in 1863 by a congressional act of incorporation, signed by Abraham Lincoln, that calls on the Academy to act as an official adviser of the federal government, upon request, in any matter of science or technology.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.