

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Eileen Conrad

UCSB Physicist and Spouse Establish Endowed Chair Experimental Physics

UC Santa Barbara has received a \$500,000 gift from UCSB Physics Professor Guenter Ahlers and his wife, June, to establish an endowed chair in experimental physics, his area of academic expertise.

The couple said they made the gift to express their appreciation to the university and the department, where he has been a faculty member since 1979.

Initially, the Ahlers Chair will support the teaching and research of an outstanding scholar specializing in the subfield of soft condensed matter or biological physics.

"UCSB has one of the finest physics departments in the world," said Ahlers, a distinguished experimental condensed matter physicist. "The research done here is of the utmost value in many ways both to the campus and the national research enterprise, but if we compare any other departments of similar stature, they have many senior faculty that occupy endowed chairs. Our department has one, the Worster Chair. June and I wanted to do our little part to try to help in this important area."

Endowed chairs are highly prized academic positions that honor academic excellence. They enable a university to attract and retain great scholars and to develop more fully a field of study by providing ongoing financial support for enhanced research and teaching.

"We are deeply grateful to Guenter and June for their generous, visionary gift," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "This endowed chair will help to reaffirm UC Santa Barbara's strong tradition of excellence in the field of experimental physics, which is the legacy of Professor Ahlers. It will reflect the lasting impact of Guenter's pioneering interdisciplinary contributions and extraordinary leadership in advancing physics research and teaching. The Guenter and June Ahlers Chair in Experimental Physics will enable us to attract and retain a brilliant physicist, and will make a profound and enduring contribution to the academic excellence of UC Santa Barbara."

Ahlers is recognized as an international leader in the area of critical phenomena – the behavior of materials undergoing a change in phase – and in fluid mechanics. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Mark Srednicki, chair of physics, said: "The physics faculty are deeply honored that our colleague, Professor Ahlers, has chosen to make such a major investment in our future. The Guenter and June Ahlers Chair in Physics will enable us to strengthen our research and educational efforts in a key area of science, and will provide many new opportunities for faculty and students."

Over the years, the couple has given generously to the campus. Their gifts include a large endowment to recruit and support outstanding graduate students in physics and a bronze sculpture by Allan Houser located in the Humanities and Social Sciences building.

UCSB's Physics Department is ranked among the top programs in the country. The campus is also home to the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics, which brings together the world's foremost theorists to study problems in overlapping, specialized subfields of the discipline.

Since the inception of The Campaign for UC Santa Barbara in 2000, UCSB's endowment -- now estimated at \$201 million -- has grown by \$126 million.

Fifty-four new endowed professorships have been established during the campaign to help build and support the teaching and research of the university's distinguished faculty, bringing UCSB's total to 78.

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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.