

UC SANTA BARBARA

# *THE Current*

August 7, 2003

Paul Desruisseaux

## **UCSB Appoints New Dean of Social Sciences Division**

The University of California, Santa Barbara has named a prominent sociologist and innovative foundation leader to be its next dean of social sciences.

Melvin L. Oliver has been, since 1996, vice president for asset building and community development at the Ford Foundation, an international grantmaking organization that is one of the largest and most accomplished private philanthropies in the United States. He joined the New York-based foundation after more than two decades on the faculty at UCLA, where he served as a professor of sociology and policy studies, a director of the Center for the Study of Urban Poverty, the chair of an interdepartmental B.A. and M.A. program in African-American Studies, and a faculty associate of the Center for Afro-American Studies.

"I am extremely pleased to announce this appointment, which is the product of an extensive national search," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "Professor Oliver was the unanimous choice of our campus search advisory committee. He is a leading scholar and social scientist who has done pioneering research on wealth and racial stratification, inter-ethnic conflict, urban poverty, and social-welfare policy in the United States. He also is a seasoned administrator with vision and determination as well as impressive leadership skills. His background makes him uniquely qualified to help our campus strengthen the link between teaching and research, and between research and real-world challenges."

Dr. Oliver is expected to take up his new duties by April 1, 2004.

The Division of Social Sciences is part of UCSB's College of Letters and Science, which enrolls 80 percent of all undergraduates. The division includes 12 departments or programs, most of which also offer graduate study. Given UCSB's emphasis on interdisciplinary research and teaching, many of the division's units are actively engaged in collaborations with programs and departments in other divisions.

As vice president of the Ford Foundation, Oliver has led a \$180-million-per-year grantmaking program to reduce poverty and injustice around the world. He has been involved in planning and building large-scale demonstration projects, hiring program staff, and working closely with community and government leaders in the United States and abroad.

Oliver was a scholar in residence at the Russell Sage Foundation in 1996, and, from 1998 to 2000, served as an elected-at-large member of the Council of the American Sociological Association.

He is co-author, with Thomas Shapiro, of the highly influential book *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. In 1996, the book won the C. Wright Mills Award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems, and the Outstanding Book Award on the subject of human rights from the Gustavus Myers Center. In 1997, it received the American Sociological Association's Distinguished Scholarly Publications Award.

In the mid-1990s, Oliver helped direct a multi-city study of urban inequality that brought together scholars from diverse disciplines and multiple research sites. A joint effort of UCLA and the poverty research center at the University of Michigan, the study led to the publication of six volumes and numerous articles. Oliver's work on the project is considered among his most important contributions to urban sociology.

Oliver also has a distinguished record as a teacher and mentor. He designed and co-taught the first course in ethnic studies at UCLA, bringing undergraduates in contact with eminent ethnic-studies scholars and actively engaging them in community service projects and research. For this and other innovative teaching practices, he received a California Professor of the Year award from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a Faculty of Excellence award from UCLA's National

Mortar Board Honor Society, and the Charles and Harriet Luckman Distinguished Teaching Award from the UCLA Alumni Association.

"Melvin Oliver brings with him a record of tremendous scholarship and demonstrated leadership," said Gene Lucas, acting Executive Vice Chancellor at UCSB. "He will be a wonderful addition to the Division of Social Sciences and to our campus as a whole."

Of his appointment, Oliver said: "I am delighted to join UCSB as dean of social sciences and I am gratified by the strength of support for my appointment from both the faculty and administration. I believe the Division of Social Sciences---with its already strong interdisciplinary emphasis, its focus on new areas of scholarship, and its commitment to cutting-edge research, teaching and training---is uniquely poised to make significant contributions to public issues and policy, locally, nationally, and globally. I am confident that in the coming years we can build on these strengths through the strategic addition of new faculty, the promotion of exciting new teaching and research initiatives, and increased external funding through grants and gifts. I look forward to working with my colleagues on these efforts."

Oliver succeeds Edward Donnerstein, dean of social sciences from 1997 to 2002, who left UCSB to become dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Arizona.

The division's associate dean, John Woolley, a professor of political science, has been serving as acting dean and will continue in that role. "We are deeply grateful for Professor Woolley's exemplary and dedicated leadership during this interim period," said Chancellor Yang.

---

## **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.