

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Eileen Conrad

## **Catholic Studies Initiative Reaches Significant Milestone**

UC Santa Barbara has reached a major milestone in an effort to enhance Catholic Studies in the campus's renowned Department of Religious Studies through an endowment supporting professorships, fellowships, and special programs.

The J. E. and Lillian Tipton Foundation, of Santa Ynez, has made a \$1.1 million gift to establish a visiting professorship in the interdisciplinary field of Catholic Studies.

The J. E. and Lillian Byrne Tipton Distinguished Visiting Professorship will enable the department to bring outstanding scholars and public figures to UCSB for a quarter or longer to teach, present public lectures, and conduct research.

The grant from the Tipton Foundation brings to \$3 million the total raised thus far in a joint university and community fund-raising effort for the Virgil Cordano Endowment in Catholic Studies.

The endowment, which honors the Franciscan friar and scholar who was a former pastor of the St. Barbara Parish at the Santa Barbara Mission, is also expected to include an endowed chair in his name.

These developments are to be officially announced Friday night (Jan. 23) at a special celebration of Father Cordano's 85th birthday, to benefit Catholic Studies at UCSB.

The event at the Coral Casino is sold out and no tickets are available.

"We are extremely grateful to the Tipton Foundation and the many other devoted benefactors who gave so generously to this initiative," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang.

"The Tipton visiting professorship and the Cordano endowment will advance the understanding of Catholicism and bring international attention to our leading efforts in the important field of religious studies. Father Cordano has devoted his life to promoting greater understanding of religions and increased dialogue among them. He has been an inspiration to students and scholars as well as to generations of Santa Barbarans, and this endowment will serve as an important tribute to his life and work."

Together, the endowments provide permanent financial support for teaching, research, and public programming related to Catholicism's history and philosophy, artistic and cultural manifestations, and its role in contemporary society, said Wade Clark Roof, chair of the Department of Religious Studies and Rowny Professor of Religion and Society at UCSB.

"On behalf of the Department of Religious Studies, I want to thank the J. E. & Lillian Tipton Foundation for its generous gift, and the numerous donors and volunteers who have worked so hard to make the Virgil Cordano endowment possible," said Roof.

The foundation, in a prepared statement, said it was "truly a blessing to make a gift to enhance Catholic Studies at UCSB.

The distinguished visiting professors, dynamic leaders in their fields, will bring new ideas and perspectives to the campus and the community."

The J. E. & Lillian Tipton Foundation is committed to supporting higher education with an emphasis on religion and spirituality.

Previously, the foundation established a community learning center at UC's Sedgwick Reserve in the Santa Ynez Valley.

The Cordano Endowment in Catholic Studies has received numerous gifts, including \$1 million from Charles Schwab, major gifts from Charles and Harriett Burke and Richard and Marguerite Berti, and many other generous contributors.

Father Cordano, who has a doctorate in sacred scripture, was instrumental in shaping community sentiment that encouraged the establishment of a Department of Religious Studies at UCSB more than 40 years ago.

Today, the department is widely considered one of the major centers in North America for the study of religions.

UCSB is the only campus in the UC system that offers a comprehensive undergraduate program in religious studies as well as advanced degrees, including the Ph.D.

The National Research Council ranks UCSB's program in the top 10 in the nation and second among all public universities.

Scholars in UCSB's Department of Religious Studies teach about the religions of the world and the complex relationships that link religion and society, politics, war, morality, the arts, and everyday life.

They study religion from a variety of perspectives: historical, cultural, literary, aesthetic, sociological, experiential, and philosophical.

The department also offers courses in classical languages including Hebrew, Aramaic, Coptic, Arabic, Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi, and Tibetan, helping students to develop the language and research skills necessary for serious textual study.

The department's 16 faculty members count among their colleagues 20 affiliated faculty members from other departments.

The department serves approximately 80 graduate students, 160 undergraduate majors, and several hundred other students who enroll in religious studies courses every quarter.

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## **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.