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UC Center for New Racial Studies at Be Located at UC Santa Barbara

With a \$1.73 million grant from the UC Office of the President, a new multi-campus research program is preparing to launch at UC Santa Barbara. The UC Center for New Racial Studies (UCCNRS) will support innovative race and ethnicity research and teaching throughout the UC system. Making its official debut in July, the center is a part of UCSB's Institute for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research, the campus's organized research unit for social science.

"The idea is to create a network, a research institute that spans the entire UC system," said Howard Winant, professor of sociology and director of the center. "We are inspired by past efforts within the UC system to highlight issues of race and racism. At the same time, we recognize that hundreds of current UC faculty and thousands of UC students continue to do cutting-edge research on these issues. Our goal is to support their work and to help generate a new account of race and racism in California and, ultimately, beyond it as well. For example, the demographic changes occurring in California -- as well as the state's education, criminal justice, and budget crises -- all have significant racial dimensions."

That wide range of race-oriented research conducted at UC is reflected in the center's steering committee, which includes scholars from the social sciences, humanities, area studies, public policy, and law.

The center is guaranteed funding for five years, with each year focusing on a different area of research emphasis. For the 2010-11 academic year, the theme is "The Nation and Its Peoples: Citizens, Denizens, Migrants," and research will center on issues related to immigration, citizenship, and the racial dimensions of national identity. Earlier this month, \$150,000 in grants were awarded to UC faculty members and graduate students for research to be carried out next year.

"Researchers are looking at these issues broadly," Winant said. "They are asking, 'Who and what is the American people?' and 'How does race shape our sense of nationhood?' They are also working on parallel issues in other countries and other epochs." Themes to be addressed in subsequent years include "Race Neutrality and Race Consciousness," "The Racial State," "Race, Gender, Class Intersectionality," and "Global Raciality: Empire, Post-Coloniality, and Identity."

"The underlying rationale is to broaden and deepen what's already happening in terms of research, collaboration, and knowledge production in this vital area," Winant continued. "The current social, political, and cultural environment -- in the age of Obama -- is quite different from what it was during the Civil Rights era. The interest in race has diversified and been transformed in the 21st century."

While its primary commitment is to establish a research network of UC scholars, the center also seeks to forge links with other academic networks and institutions, as well as non-academic groups, working on issues of race and racism. "UC probably has the deepest 'bench' of any university in the country, or even the whole world, in terms of intellectual talent focused on this complex issue," Winant said. "If that enormous group of scholars can work together more closely, we may be able to exercise a positive influence and help reframe debates."

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.