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Amgen Founder, Philanthropist Named Honorary Alumnus of UC Santa Barbara

Honored for his altruistic philanthropy, and celebrated for a decades-long devotion to improving health by advancing science, Amgen founder William K. "Bill" Bowes has been named an honorary alumnus of UC Santa Barbara.

The UC Santa Barbara Alumni Association bestows honorary alumni status upon a select few who have greatly contributed to the success and excellence of the university. Past honorees include Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree, Marcy Carsey, and Paul Orfalea.

"I think it's terrific," Bowes said of the plaudit he received in a special ceremony. "This is a great institution. It's sort of breathtaking, really. I'm very appreciative. When the chancellor first brought it up to me, I couldn't believe it. Now I guess I do."

With his wife, Ute, Bowes is a longtime benefactor of UCSB. They helped establish the George and Joy Rathmann Fellowships in the Division of Molecular, Life, and Physical Science, and the John Carbon Chair in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. In memory of Bowes' mother -- a physician and Santa Barbara native -- they endowed the Ruth Garland Professorships and Directorship of the Center for Stem Cell Biology and Engineering with a \$3-million gift. Most recently, they pledged \$5 million for an endeavor to develop stem cell therapies for ocular disease.

"Your generosity to UC Santa Barbara is such an inspiration to us," Chancellor Henry T. Yang said in honoring Bowes. "Through your generosity we are able to recruit and retain world-class faculty. Together we are expanding the frontiers of bioengineering and bio-medicine. This is such an exciting and critical area, with tremendous potential to transform global human health. This is also an area where UC Santa Barbara's culture of cross-disciplinary research really shines.

"Bill, we are deeply grateful for your vision and philanthropic leadership," Yang continued. "Truly, you exemplify the spirit and values of UC Santa Barbara."

The Boweses have a history of support and advocacy for medical research that is reflected in their giving to UCSB. Their latest donation -- the aforementioned \$5 million -- may be the best example yet. Besides funding the Garland Initiative for Vision -- a five-year project targeting age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy with stem cell treatments -- it also marks the lead gift for a fledgling campus biomedical effort called EMBODI. Bearing the slogan "This is the new medicine," EMBODI (Engineering, Medicine, Biology, Discovery, Innovation) is a collaboration of assorted UCSB institutes, centers, and research groups to spread the word about campus advancements with the potential to impact global human health.

The ocular innovation under development through the Garland Initiative, which hopes to move its therapies into clinical trials within five years, is exactly the sort of advancement that EMBODI will espouse. And the distinguished faculty members leading the vision project are precisely the type of campus champions to do so.

Stem cell pioneer James Thomson, a professor of molecular, cellular, and developmental biology at UCSB, is also director of regenerative biology at the Morgridge Institute for Research, and a professor at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. In 1998, he became the first person to derive human embryonic stem cells. Time Magazine put Thomson on its cover in August 2001, describing him as "one of America's Best in science and medicine." Lauded engineer H. Tom Soh, a professor of mechanical engineering and associate director of California NanoSystems Institute, won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2010, and the National Institutes of Health Edward Nagy Award in 2011.

Thomson and Soh are UCSB's Ruth Garland Professors and co-directors of its Center for Stem Cell Biology and Engineering. With Dennis Clegg, also a professor of

molecular, cellular, and developmental biology, and founder and executive director of the center, they are shepherding the 2012-launched Garland Initiative.

The three were formally installed in their respective roles during an investiture ceremony on campus -- with the Boweses sitting front and center -- that saw each professor give a brief inaugural lecture and remarks about their efforts to tackle sight loss.

"We have this cluster of expertise at UC Santa Barbara that is better than any place in the world," said Thomson. "We're going to focus very much in bringing my expertise with stem cells together with Dennis's expertise with macular degeneration and Tom's expertise with engineering ... and we think we can make a lot of progress."

Bill Bowes agreed. "Stem cells hold great hope for the future in terms of cures," he said. "The more quality institutions we have working on it, the better the outcomes are going to come. And UC Santa Barbara is one of those places where great things could happen."

A still-active founding partner of Silicon Valley-based U.S. Venture Partners, Bowes has been a successful venture capitalist in the San Francisco Bay Area for nearly 50 years. He was a founding shareholder and the first chairman and treasurer of Amgen, Inc., a leading human therapeutics company that launched the biotechnology industry's first blockbuster medicines.

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† Top image: Chancellor Henry T. Yang, William K. Bowes, Jr., and Jan Campbell, incoming president of the UC Santa Barbara Alumni Association's Board of Directors.

Credit: Tony Mastres

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