

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

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## Artistic Honors

Celesta M. Billeci, the Miller McCune Executive Director of UC Santa Barbara's Arts & Lectures (A&L) program has received the 2015 Jerry Willis Leadership Award from The Western Arts Alliance (WAA). The award was presented at the organization's 48th annual conference in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The Jerry Willis Leadership Award recognizes members whose innovation, hard work and dedication advance the performing arts field — those who have made an outstanding impact in the west and nationally. The peer-to-peer award acknowledges Billeci and UCSB Arts & Lectures (A&L) as one of the most important and influential presenters in the Western United States and Canada.

"I am incredibly honored to be recognized by WAA for continuing the remarkable history of Arts & Lectures," Billeci said. "It is wonderful to be a part of a team that is committed to bringing some of the world's greatest artists and influential people to our community."

With more than 25 years of experience in the performing arts, Billeci joined A&L as executive director in 2000. Now one of the largest and most impactful arts and lectures organizations on the west coast, A&L boasts an impressive roster of world-class artists and speakers, most recently including Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai; Pulitzer Prize-winning author David McCullough; New York City Ballet MOVES; and The Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma.

Billeci's accomplishments as A&L director are many. They include expanding A&L's programming to venues throughout the Santa Barbara region; strengthening A&L's position as one of the area's most significant presenters; collaborating with community arts organizations; providing college, K-12 and community outreach and master classes; and commissioning new works. One of A&L's landmark community collaborations, "¡Vive el Arte de Santa Bárbara," which provides free community performances and outreach events to underserved Latino communities, celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> season in 2015-2016.

Prior to joining A&L, Billeci was director's associate for UCLA Live, one of the country's largest and most diverse performing arts programs. She has served as president of California Presenters and as a board member and chair of the professional development committee of the Western Arts Alliance.

Recipients of WAA's 2015 Awards Program are chosen by a committee of members and are recognized during the annual conference during which nearly 700 performing arts executives, artists and managers gather to book performances for stages across the west. Previous recipients of the Jerry Willis Leadership Award include Randall Kline, SFJAZZ (2013); White Bird Dance (2011); Robert Cole, Cal Performances (2003); and others. More information about the Western Arts Alliance and the Jerry Willis Leadership Award can be found at <http://westarts.org/waa-awards>.

Founded in 1959, [UCSB Arts & Lectures](#) presents more than 100 events annually, from critically acclaimed concerts and dance performances by world-renowned artists to talks by groundbreaking authors and newsmakers at UCSB and Santa Barbara-area venues. With a mission to educate, entertain and inspire, A&L also oversees an outreach program that brings visiting artists and speakers into local classrooms and other venues for master classes, open rehearsals, discussions and more, serving K-12, college students and the general public.

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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.