

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE **Current**

March 21, 2001

Bill Schlotter

Accomplished UCSB Classicist Apostolos Athanassakis Inaugurated as Argyropoulos Chair in Hellenic Studies

Distinguished classics scholar Apostolos Athanassakis, in his 33rd year on the UC Santa Barbara faculty, was inaugurated Tuesday, March 20 as the first James and Sarah Argyropoulos Professor of Hellenic Studies.

Mr. and Mrs. Argyropoulos endowed the position with a \$500,000 donation to UCSB's College of Letters and Science to help ensure that knowledge of Greek culture -- past and present -- will be preserved and shared with future generations.

"Our goal is to support scholarship in classical Greek studies and to bring a greater understanding of modern Hellenic culture through activities that will touch students and the community at large," said James Argyropoulos, a Santa Barbara entrepreneur who immigrated to the United States from Greece.

Professor Athanassakis also immigrated from Greece, coming to the United States at the age of 19 to pursue a university education.

He earned a bachelor's degree at Pennsylvania's Lincoln University, and followed it with a master's degree and doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania.

Since 1968, Athanassakis has been a professor in UCSB's Department of Classics and has specialized in Greek poetry and classical linguistics.

He sees his appointment as a mix of honor, opportunity and commitment.

"Of course, I am honored," Athanassakis said.

"But above all, I look at the chair as a great instrument."

He said he has several mandates.

He must be a spokesman for Hellenic Studies at UCSB, promoting interdisciplinary research efforts throughout the university's various departments. And he must try to forge new alliances with foundations and donors that are likewise dedicated to modern and classical Hellenic issues.

The creation of the chair, Athanassakis said, symbolizes -- to other universities, cultural foundations and donors -- a long-term commitment to Hellenic studies by UCSB.

It is also another important step forward for the university.

"Endowments of this kind are of inestimable value in our continuing effort to extend the excellence of UCSB," said Chancellor Henry T. Yang.

"The Argyropoulos' vision and commitment to the future of the university and the College of Letters and Science are truly extraordinary, and we are grateful for their generosity."

David Marshall, Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts, said the new chair is in keeping with the interdisciplinary focus of research at UCSB.

"At UCSB, the field of classical studies is strong in several departments and in interdisciplinary areas of scholarship and teaching that cross departmental boundaries," Marshall said.

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.