UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB Confernece to Reconsider Reagan Presidency

During his eight years as president, Ronald Reagan was immensely popular with the American public.

But two decades later, how do historians view the administration of the Great Communicator?

At a conference on the Reagan presidency to be held at UC Santa Barbara Thursday, March 28 through Saturday, March 30, some of the nation's leading authorities on the Reagan Administration will take a second-generation look at the Reagan White House, its performance and its legacy.

"We hope that people who attend the Reagan conference will encounter some new discoveries about the Reagan presidency and come away with a sense of how scholars, more than a decade after the close of the Reagan era, now evaluate and interpret his presidency," said W. Elliot Brownlee, a professor of history at UCSB and co-organizer of the conference.

More than 80 university professors from across the country and Europe have registered to attend and will participate in 24 workshops. Topics range from President Reagan's leadership, personality and style to his policies on civil rights, national security, welfare and women's rights.

On Thursday, three plenary sessions will feature keynote talks by James T. Patterson, Ford Foundation Professor of History at Brown University (9 a.m., Corwin Pavilion); Lou Cannon, a retired journalist who covered the Reagan White House for the Washington Post and wrote the Reagan biography, "To the Best of His Ability: The Reagan Presidency" (4 p.m., Corwin Pavilion); and Richard V. Allen, who advised the president on foreign policy and national security (6:30 p.m., Faculty Club).

The conference is open to the public.

Those planning to attend must register and pay conference fees, $10 each for Thursday and Friday, $5 for Saturday. Registration and other conference information is available on-line at the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center web site.

Hugh Davis Graham, Holland McTyeire Professor of History and a professor of political science at Vanderbilt University, is the other conference organizer.

Graham organized a similar conference on the presidency of Jimmy Carter in 1997, Brownlee said.

An expert in the history of governmental finances, Brownlee -- with Eugene Steuerle of The Urban Institute -- will present a paper titled, "The President as Accidental Reformer: Tax Policy during the Reagan Administration."

Other scholars presenting new research include Martha Derthick and Steven M. Teles (University of Virginia), "Reagan and Social Security;" Alice O'Connor (UCSB), "The Reagan 'Blueprint' for Welfare Reform;" Samuel F. Wells, Jr., (associate director, The Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars) "Reagan, Euromissles, and Europe;" Ted V. McAllister (Pepperdine), "Ronald Reagan and the Transformation of American Conservatism:" and Jeffery K. Stine (Smithsonian Institution), "Environmental Policy during the Reagan Administration."

Fred P. Graham of Court TV will chair a panel discussion of the judicial strategy of the Reagan Presidency.

The conference is sponsored by UCSB's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, the College of Letters and Science, UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies, the All-University of California Group in Economic History; Vanderbilt University; the University Press of Kansas; the Young America's Foundation: The Reagan Ranch; and others.

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