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NOTED VISITING ISLAMIC STUDIES SCHOLAR TO DISCUSS ISSUES FACING MUSLIMS IN THE UNITED STATES AT UCSB

Jane I. Smith, professor of Islamic Studies and co-director of the Duncan Black McDonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Conn., has been named the 2002-2003 Michaelsen Endowed Visiting Scholar by the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

As this year's Michaelsen Scholar, Smith will present a free public lecture titled "Caught in the Crunch: Issues Facing Muslims in America" on Wednesday, Nov. 13, at 3 p.m. in the sixth-floor McCune Conference Room of the Humanities and Social Sciences Building at UCSB.

Her presentation will address the challenges faced by U.S. Muslims today -- questions of leadership, political involvement, practice of the faith, changing roles for women, education, and response to perceived American racial and ethnic prejudices.

In the context of the last fourteen months, Smith will remind her audience that Muslims have struggled against religious defamation, suspicion of terrorist intent,

and challenges to some of their basic rights as American citizens.

Her lecture will highlight ways in which Muslims are responding to these challenges.

Established in July 2000 by the late Robert S. Michaelsen and his wife, Florence, the endowment is designed to bring to campus annually a highly distinguished national or international scholar for an intensive set of presentations and discussions.

In addition to presenting a formal lecture, Michaelsen scholars meet with faculty and students, visit classes, and are available for informal conversation during a three-day residency.

The lectureship and program honors Robert Michaelsen (1919-2000), who came to UCSB in 1965, chaired the Department of Religious Studies in its early days, and provided leadership in establishing a graduate program.

Recognized for his commitment to religious studies in public universities, he was sought after for counsel by many universities in establishing programs and departments of this kind.

Michaelsen was named the first J.F. Rowny Professor of Religion and Society at UCSB in 1998. He also served in a variety of top administrative roles at the university, including terms as Acting Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and as the Vice Chancellor of UCSB under three chancellors. He retired in 1999.

Smith has done extensive work on Muslim communities in America, Christian theology in relation to Islam, the historical relations between Christians and Muslims, Islamic conceptions of death and afterlife, and the role and status of women in Islam.

Her book "Islam in America" (Columbia University Press, 1999) is the definitive study of American Islam. Her latest work is "Muslim Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible"

(AltaMira Press, 2002), edited with Yvonne Haddad.

Smith is co-editor of "The Muslim World," a journal dedicated to the study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations; a participant in an interfaith study project of the World Council of Church's Ecumenical Institute; and a member of the Commission on Interfaith Relations of the National Council of Churches. She is also editor of the

section on Islam in the new

"Encyclopedia of Women in World Religions" and convener of the North American Regional Research Team for the Pew Program on Christian Theological Education in Muslim Contexts.

She travels frequently to various parts of the Muslim world and speaks to academic and community groups about recent developments in Islam and its relationship to the West.

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.