

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Eileen Conrad

Capps Center Receives \$580,000 Endowment Gift

The Walter Capps Center for the Study of Religion and Public Life has received a \$580,000 planned gift from Leinie Schilling Bard, of Santa Barbara, that will provide endowment support for the center.

The Capps Center at UC Santa Barbara seeks to advance discussion of compelling issues related to religion, ethics, and public life through colloquia and student internships and fellowships.

"I decided to include the Capps Center in my estate plan to help continue the important work of the center long into the future, and to honor Walter Capps, a man of kindness, compassion, sensitivity, and wisdom," said Bard, a generous campus benefactor, in describing her recent gift to UCSB made through a charitable remainder trust.

The center honors the legacy of Capps, a popular professor of religious studies at UCSB for 33 years who was elected to the House of Representatives in 1996.

Capps died in 1997 during his first term in office.

His widow, Lois, who represents California's 22nd Congressional District, succeeded him in Congress.

Throughout Walter Capps's career, he sought to bring the university and the community together.

Capps believed that the values of diverse religions could enrich public life, and that the inclusion of all perspectives was vital to an informed and engaged citizenry.

Wade Clark Roof, center director and chair of the Department of Religious Studies, said, "This is a wonderful vote of confidence in the work of the Capps Center.

We are deeply grateful to Leinie Schilling Bard for this extraordinary gift.

It will assure that the Capps Center will be able to expand its programs in the future."

The Capps Center encourages dialogue on issues of broad public concern, including war and peace, environmental ethics, religious and spiritual trends, inter-faith dialogue and positive pluralism, and ethical issues generally facing people in California.

It is non-partisan and non-sectarian.

At UCSB, Capps taught a popular course on Religion and the Vietnam War, which attempted to bridge the gap between generations of Americans.

For many veterans, the course provided a first opportunity to tell their stories.

During the war, Bard spent a month in Saigon volunteering at the Caritas Home Orphanage teaching blind Vietnamese boys at the Tabord School and teaching English at a pagoda on the outskirts of the city.

After returning to Santa Barbara, she eventually sided with anti-war protestors, but was "horrified" by their treatment of Vietnam veterans.

Bard attended Capps's lectures in Campbell Hall, where he invited Vietnam veterans to tell their stories.

"Walter would ask the students to please join him in welcoming them home," she said.

"It was a very touching and moving experience for everyone present.

Often the vets cried, and so did we."

The Capps Center is supported by UCSB, private contributions, and grants, including a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). To qualify for the NEH grant, the center must raise an additional \$1 million by July 31, 2006.

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[Walter H. Capps Center](#)

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