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French Government Confers High Honor on UCSB's Ronald Tobin

The French government has bestowed a major honor on a professor and senior administrator at UC Santa Barbara for his contributions to scholarship and the understanding and appreciation of French culture.

Ronald W. Tobin, a professor of French and UCSB's associate vice chancellor for academic programs, has been honored by the French Ministry of Education with the highest level of knighthood conferred upon academics. The award, the "Commander in the Order of the Academic Palms," was made in recognition of Tobin's

"services rendered to French culture" and his work on behalf of the French language and culture in the United States. In 1999, the French government honored Tobin with "Knighthood in the Order of Arts and Letters."

The latest award was presented to Tobin on April 17 in a ceremony at the campus home of UCSB Chancellor Henry Yang and his wife, Dilling. "It is with great joy and pride that we have come together to honor our distinguished colleague," said Chancellor Yang, noting that Tobin has been a UCSB faculty member for 37 years.

Andre Belais, the Cultural Attaché at the French Consulate in Los Angeles, represented the Ministry of Education in conferring the award on Tobin. He saluted Tobin for his scholarly work and said that the academic—a specialist in 17th century French literature and theatre—had much in common with the period he studies. "Both

are baroque and classic," noted Belais. In presenting the medal and certificate, Belais commended Tobin for his dedication to "the creative process" and for his writings, saying they were "so rich, so instructive."

"This knighthood is in recognition of a lifetime of devotion to France," said Tobin, "and I am particularly pleased that it was awarded during Henry Yang's tenure as chancellor, since he has been very supportive of my efforts."

Tobin joined the UCSB faculty in 1969. While he has served as associate vice chancellor for academic programs since 1989, he has continued his teaching and research. He was named "Professor of the Year" at UCSB in 1984. Earlier in his career on the campus he twice served as chair of the Department of French and Italian, and as assistant dean of the College of Letters and Sciences. He has been involved in education abroad programs and has championed foreign study as an important element of higher education. He also has been chair of the campus UCTV committee and been very active in promoting educational and scholarly programming on public access television.

He has published widely in scholarly journals and is the author or editor of a dozen volumes, in both French and English, on literature, theatre, and culture. One of his popular offerings was titled *Tarte à la crème: Comedy and Gastronomy in Molière's Theatre*, which was published originally in English and later in Italian. He served for 12 years as editor-in-chief of the *French Review*,

which has the largest circulation of any journal of French studies in the world.

Among the many special recognitions accorded Tobin's scholarly work, the annual conference of the North American Society for 17th-Century French Literature in 2003 was devoted to his research and writing. The gathering, at Dartmouth College, produced a festschrift—a collection of testimonials and essays about Tobin's work—written by scholars from around the world. It was titled *Theatrum Mundi: Studies in Honor of Ronald W. Tobin*.

He has been a Fulbright Fellow and a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, and also has won fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies. He has been a visiting professor or guest lecturer at many institutions in the United States and France as well as other countries.

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