

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

May 11, 2007

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## **World Renowned Astronomer to Discuss 'Runaway Universe' at Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History**

Alex Filippenko, Ph.D., a world-renowned astronomer and prize-winning professor of astronomy at the University of California, Berkeley, will speak about some of the mysteries of the universe at a special lecture at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Thursday, May 17 at 7:30 p.m.

The talk, in which Filippenko will discuss "dark energy" and the "runaway universe," is the second in a series that brings a world-famous astrophysicist to spend a week at UC Santa Barbara, during which he or she delivers a public lecture at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. UCSB's Department of Physics, the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network, and the museum are the sponsors of this annual Las Cumbres Observatories Prize Lectures Series on astrophysics.

Tickets for the May 17 event are \$8 for students and museum members or \$10 for non-members.

They may be purchased at the museum's Admissions Office, open 10 to 5 Sunday through Saturday.

Tickets will also be available at the door.

Filippenko, an alumnus of UC Santa Barbara, will discuss observations made in 1998 of very distant exploding stars called supernovae and how these provide intriguing evidence that the expansion of the universe is now speeding up, rather than slowing down due to gravity, as scientists had expected. Today, new and completely independent observations strongly support this surprising conclusion. Over the largest scales of space, the universe seems to be dominated by a repulsive "dark energy" of unknown origin, stretching the very fabric of space itself faster and faster with time.

Filippenko earned his bachelor's degree in the physics program of UCSB's College of Creative Studies and his Ph.D. in astronomy from Caltech in 1984. He joined the UC Berkeley faculty in 1986. He has coauthored about 500 scientific publications and has won numerous prizes for his research. He has also won top teaching awards at Berkeley, and in 2006 was named the National Professor of the Year among doctoral institutions by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. He has produced a 96-lecture astronomy video course with The Teaching Company and has coauthored an award-winning astronomy textbook.

#### ABOUT THE LAS CUMBRES OBSERVATORY LECTURES

The Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network (LCOGT), the Department of Physics at UC Santa Barbara and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (SBMNH) share an important and fundamental goal: education.

LCOGT is establishing a world-class outreach effort through construction of small telescope networks and an astronomical outreach website. The SBMNH places a high priority on public education, and astrophysics is an excellent field for this endeavor because of the intrinsic public appeal and the strong local community of amateur astronomers. The Department of Physics is building its efforts in astrophysics, and expanding the research horizons of our graduate students is a high priority.

Thanks to the generosity and support of LCOGT, over the next five years, these three organizations will partner to bring an eminent astrophysicist to Santa Barbara once a year. The astronomer will present a high profile public lecture in the Fleischmann Auditorium at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, two graduate level lectures at UCSB to physics graduate students on the frontiers of the field, and interact with the scientific and outreach staff at LCOGT. These lectures will

be taped and available for distribution by DVD and web-streaming.

This annual lecture series provides an opportunity for community members, students, and scientists in Santa Barbara to interact with these high profile scientists from around the world and learn about the frontiers of the exciting fields of astrophysics and cosmology.

Related Links

[Las Cumbres Observatory Lectures](#)

[Alex Filippenko](#)

[SBMNH Astronomy Programs](#)

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## **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.