UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

October 24, 2007
Gail Gallessich

# Packard Fellowship Awarded to UCSB Physicist

Tommaso Treu, assistant professor of physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has been awarded a prestigious Packard Foundation Fellowship for Science and Engineering.

The Packard Foundation Fellowship Advisory Panel, made up of distinguished scientists and engineers, invites the presidents of 50 leading research universities to nominate two young professors each from their institutions every year. This year the panel selected 20 fellows from 100 candidates. Candidates must be young faculty members in the first three years of their academic careers. The intent of the fellowship program is to provide support for unusually creative researchers early in their careers. The fellowship of $625,000, paid over five years, may be used for any reasonable research expenditure.

Treu is developing innovative techniques and astronomical observations to study the role of black holes and dark matter in the formation and evolution of galaxies. "Whereas most studies in the past have focused on the luminous components of galaxies –– like stars and gas –– it has recently become clear that we cannot understand the universe as it appears today unless we study its ‘dark side' as well," said Treu. "Since we cannot see the dark side directly we need to be creative and infer its presence by its gravitational effects, such as the bending of light rays from background sources, or the high speed motion of gas swirling into black holes."

Regarding the award, Chancellor Yang said this distinction brings honor both to Treu and to UCSB, "and is an exciting affirmation of the excellence and significance of his research."

Mark Srednicki, chair of the physics department, said that the astrophysics group at UCSB is comparatively small, but with an enviable record for excellent science. "This latest award is indicative of their growing impact on the field," he said.

Over the past 19 years, the Packard Foundation Fellowship Program has awarded 404 fellowships, totaling over $232 million, to faculty members at 52 top national universities. It is among the nation's largest nongovernmental program designed to seek out and reward the pursuit of scientific discovery with "no strings attached" support. The Fellowship Program supports research in a broad range of disciplines that includes physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, astronomy, computer science, earth science, ocean science, and all branches of engineering.

---

## 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.