

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

May 13, 2008

Gail Gallessich

## **Prominent Physicist to Discuss Black Hole at Center of Milky Way Galaxy**

Andrea Ghez, a prominent astrophysicist from UCLA, will be in Santa Barbara next week to address the topic of the black hole at the center of our galaxy. The lecture is part of an annual series on astrophysics -- the Las Cumbres Observatory Lectures -- presented jointly by the Department of Physics at UC Santa Barbara and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

Ghez's talk, "Unveiling a Supermassive Black Hole at the Center of Our Galaxy," will be on Thursday, May 22, at 7:30 p.m., at the natural history museum. Tickets are \$8 for students and museum members, and \$10 for non-members. Advance tickets are available beginning May 15 at the museum's admissions office. For more information call 805-682-4711, extension 173, or e-mail .

More than a quarter century ago, scientists suggested that galaxies such as our own Milky Way might harbor massive, though possibly dormant, central black holes. Based on 10 years of high resolution imaging, Ghez's team has moved the case for a supermassive black hole at the galactic center from a possibility to a certainty.

Andrea Ghez, a professor of physics and astronomy at UCLA, was named one of the "20 Young Scientists to Watch" in Discover magazine's 20th anniversary issue (October 2000). Her research focuses on the origin and early life of stars and planets. She has demonstrated the existence of a supermassive black hole at the center of our galaxy, with a mass 4 million times that of our sun. Her honors and

awards include the Amelia Earhart Award, a National Science Foundation Young Investigator Award, the Annie Jump Cannon Award, a Sloan Fellowship, a Packard Fellowship, the Newton Lacy Pierce Prize from the American Astronomical Society, the Maria Goeppert-Mayer Award from the American Physical Society, and, most recently, election to the National Academy of Sciences as well as the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Ghez earned her B.S. from MIT and her Ph.D. from Caltech, and was a postdoctoral research fellow at University of Arizona's Steward Observatory. She joined UCLA's faculty in 1994.

## 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 the important and fundamental goal of 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 at UCSB is building its efforts in astrophysics, and expanding the research horizons of graduate students is a high priority.

Thanks to the generosity and support of LCOGT, over the next several years, these three organizations will bring an eminent astrophysicist to Santa Barbara once a year. The astronomer presents a high profile public lecture in the Fleischmann Auditorium at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History as well as two graduate level lectures, on the frontiers of the field, to physics graduate students at UCSB. The astronomer will also interact with the scientific and outreach staff at LCOGT. The lectures are 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 high profile scientists from around the world and to learn about the frontiers of astrophysics and cosmology.

---

## **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.