

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

June 20, 2008

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UCSB Alumnus Establishes Endowed Chair in International Security Studies

UC Santa Barbara has received a \$600,000 gift from UCSB alumnus Anton Vonk and his wife, Diane Boss, to establish an endowed chair in political science.

The Vonk professorship will support the teaching and research of a renowned scholar specializing in international security studies related to energy and the environment and will be affiliated with UCSB's Donald Bren School of Environmental Science and Management.

"Diane and I are very happy to be able to support UCSB with this gift," said Vonk.

"Our own backgrounds and experiences have persuaded us that it is important to develop broad approaches to studying international security -- especially those emphasizing the security implications of energy dependence and other environmental issues."

Vonk, who was born in the Netherlands, was president and chairman of Vitol SA, one of the world's largest oil trading companies, until his retirement in 1997.

In 2005, he earned a master's degree in political science at UCSB.

The subject of his thesis was the politics of energy resources and pipelines in the Caspian Sea region. Boss, a social psychologist and documentary filmmaker, serves on the board of the Santa Barbara Community Environmental Council.

"This is a generous gift from an extremely talented and engaged couple," said Melvin Oliver, SAGE Sara Miller McCune Dean of Social Sciences at UCSB. "They have provided an opportunity for us to expand our offerings in an area that reflects both their personal experiences and extensive knowledge and our academic focus on the social and political underpinnings of international security as it relates to our planet's environmental challenges.

We look forward to Diane Boss' and Anton Vonk's continued involvement with both the Division of Social Sciences and the Bren School in these areas in the years to come."

John Woolley, chair of political science, said the department was deeply grateful for the couple's generous gift and excited by the opportunity it presents.

"The Anton Vonk Chair in International Security gives the Political Science Department an opportunity to add a senior colleague in one of the most interesting emerging areas of security studies -- environment and security," said Woolley.

"Experts believe that threats from the environment such as energy vulnerability and climate change, for example, are the most pervasive and important of non-traditional security threats."

UCSB's graduate program in international relations is distinguished by its strength in international political economy, traditional security studies, and its links to psychology, Woolley noted.

"We are confident that the Vonk Chair will make our international relations graduate program markedly stronger, more visible, and more distinctive," he said.

"We also expect the chair to expand our ties with the Bren School, another important objective of our department."

Endowed chairs are highly prized academic positions that enable a university to attract and retain leading scholars and to develop more fully a field of study by providing ongoing financial support for enhanced research and instruction.

Benjamin Cohen, Vonk's thesis advisor and Lancaster Professor of International Political Economy, said,

"The Vonk Chair will add an important new dimension to the range of courses and research that we can offer in the area of international relations and international security and give us an opportunity to build relationships between our own international relations security work and that of the Bren School."

Since the inception of The Campaign for UC Santa Barbara in 2000, UCSB's endowment -- now estimated at \$200 million -- has grown by \$126 million.

Fifty-four new endowed professorships have been established, bringing to 78 the total number of such distinguished professorships on campus.

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