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UCSB Geologist Receives Prestigious German Award

Tanya Atwater, professor emeritus of earth science at UC Santa Barbara, will be awarded the Leopold von Buch Medal of the German Geosciences Society. It is the most prestigious award of this society to an international scholar for outstanding career contributions in the geosciences.

The award will be presented to Atwater Oct. 1 in Dresden, Germany. Geosciences have a long tradition in the city of Dresden; the roots of the Museum for Mineralogy and Geology can be traced back to 1560, when it was founded at the Saxon royal court.

"This European award came as a special surprise since most of my work has been in the Americas," said Atwater, who is widely known for her work on plate tectonics and the evolution of the San Andreas fault. "I'm thrilled to travel to Dresden to receive the award, and will enjoy jamming with the international colleagues about plate tectonics and mountain belts around the world."

Atwater will deliver a speech at the Germany Geosciences Society meeting about North American plate tectonics. It will be structured around a number of computer animations made in the UCSB Educational Multimedia Visualization Center that she created. The center is dedicated to the development of high quality visualization-enhancing materials about the earth sciences, and to harnessing the power of multimedia imagery tools to bring science to life.

Atwater was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), UC Berkeley, and Scripps Institution of Oceanography, where she earned her Ph.D. in 1972. She was a professor at MIT before joining the UCSB faculty. Atwater's research in tectonics has taken her to the bottoms of the oceans and to mountains on many continents. She is a fellow of numerous professional societies, a co-winner of the Newcomb Cleveland Prize of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and she was elected to the prestigious National Academy of Sciences in 1997.

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