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UCSB Nobel Laureate Honored as Centenary Solvay Chair

On the 100th anniversary of the first Solvay Conference on Physics, the International Solvay Institutes have created a special "Solvay Centenary Chair," which has been granted to David J. Gross, Nobel laureate in physics, for his seminal contributions to particle physics and string theory. Gross holds the Frederick W. Gluck Chair in Theoretical Physics at UC Santa Barbara and is director of UCSB's Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics.

"Conseil de Physique Solvay," the first international physics conference, took place in 1911 in Brussels, with the leading physicists of the time in attendance. That conference is considered one of the most important events in the advent of the quantum revolution, and has acquired legendary status, according to the International Solvay Institutes. The conference marked a profound rupture between classical physics and quantum physics.

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of this conference, The International Solvay Institutes have organized a conference that will make Brussels the world's capital of physics for 10 days, according to the organizers. Gross will chair the 25th Solvay Conference, "The Theory of The Quantum World."

"In addition to recognizing his outstanding scientific merits, the granting of the Solvay Centenary Chair to Professor Gross is also a way to express the gratitude of the International Solvay Institutes for the exceptional role he has played in giving

new vigor to their activities as chair of the Solvay Scientific Committee for Physics," Solvay officials said. "In this position, Professor Gross has not only brought back the Solvay Conferences to their past glory, but he has also provided invaluable help and support in defining the new scientific directions."

A lecture, "A Century of Quantum Mechanics," will be delivered by Gross on Oct. 19, and he will moderate a panel discussion on "The Future of Physics" on Oct. 23. Additionally, he will play the role of Werner Heisenberg in the reading of "Copenhagen" on Oct. 17. He will also participate in the academic ceremony, "Why Curiosity-Driven Science?" on Oct. 18.

Gross shared the 2004 Nobel Prize in Physics for solving the last great remaining problem of what has since come to be called "The Standard Model" of the quantum mechanical picture of reality. He and his co-recipients discovered how the nucleus of an atom works. The Nobel citation is: "For the discovery of asymptotic freedom in the theory of the strong interaction."

Gross came to UCSB in January 1997. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. For 31 years he was on the faculty at Princeton University, where he was Eugene Higgins Professor of Physics and Thomas Jones Professor of Mathematical Physics.

He is a Fellow of the American Physical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. His many honors and awards include the J. J. Sakurai Prize of the American Physical Society; a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship Prize; and France's highest scientific honor, the Grande Médaille D'Or (the Grand Gold Medal).

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