UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

November 26, 2013
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Honoring Altruism

In recognition of her altruistic advocacy for education — including her widespread support of schools and students of every age and at every level of academics — philanthropist Natalie Orfalea has been named an honorary alumna of UC Santa Barbara.

Orfalea, whose nonprofit Orfalea Foundation strives to strengthen communities by empowering individuals, was celebrated for her many efforts both on campus and off at a special induction ceremony on Sunday. She is only the 54th person since 1944 to be awarded honorary alumni status — the equivalent of an honorary degree — at UCSB.

“I am so proud to be part of the UCSB family,” Orfalea said of the distinction. “The Orfalea Foundation’s interest in lifelong learning finds many expressions here at UCSB, from the childcare center to the broad range of classroom curricula, to the Arts & Lectures community enrichment programs. Like our foundation, this university strengthens communities by empowering individuals, with opportunities for learning, sharing of ideas and a collaborative environment promoting individual and organizational growth.”

A longtime benefactor and, with her foundation, an engaged partner of UCSB, Orfalea’s extensive generosity to the university includes gifts to the Orfalea Family Children’s Center, the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education and UCSB Arts & Lectures. The Orfalea Foundation was instrumental in the establishment of UCSB’s master’s program in global studies, and the campus’s Orfalea Center for Global &

International Studies — entities that have each evolved into world-class hubs for training and research alike.

“Our campus is proud to name community leader and philanthropist Natalie Orfalea an honorary alumna,” said Chancellor Henry T. Yang. “As co-founder and chairperson of the Orfalea Foundation, she promotes partnerships such as Thrive Santa Barbara County, the Schools Foods Initiative, and REACH, to name just a few. At UC Santa Barbara she is a passionate advocate for education at all levels. With the Orfalea Foundation, she supports our Orfalea Fellows and our Orfalea Children’s Center, and contributed to the founding of our master’s program in global and international studies.

“We are most grateful for her dedication as an ambassador for our Arts & Lectures program and for our campus,” Yang added. “We appreciate Natalie’s wonderful gift for building bridges between the university and our Santa Barbara community.”

For Daniel Zorub, a master’s student in global studies at UCSB and recipient of an Orfalea Fellowship, the support of Orfalea and the Orfalea Foundation has also served as an inspiration. Speaking at Orfalea’s induction, Zorub said that the opportunities he has been afforded — including a 2013 summer internship in Beirut, Lebanon, working with Carnegie Endowment for International Peace — have clarified his own vision.

“Now having returned home stateside, I can share with you how my experiences abroad, though saturated with risks, have inspired the focus of my master’s thesis in the area of political risk management,” he said. “However, what has really been inspired is an even deeper endeavor to lead a life concerned with the risks to global and international peace. And that pursuit is one that I most gratefully can say is absolutely empowered by the generosity and support of Natalie Orfalea and the Orfalea Foundation.”

Describing Orfalea as “a very special woman” and “one of Santa Barbara’s most influential and distinguished philanthropists,” Jan Campbell, president of the Alumni Association’s Board of Directors, noted that honorary alumni status is reserved for “a select few who have greatly contributed to the success and excellence of the university.” Past honorees include Chancellor Henry T. Yang and his wife, Dilling, Amgen founder William K. Bowes, and philanthropists Jean Schuyler, Michael Towbes and Virgil and Betty Elings.

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.