UC SANTA BARBARA
THE Current

September 10, 2015
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'A Great Privilege'

Prominent philanthropist Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree, a devoted campus benefactor and passionate advocate for education, has been named chair of the UC Santa Barbara Foundation.

An honorary alumna of UCSB and co-chair of the Campaign for UC Santa Barbara fundraising initiative, the longtime foundation trustee characterized the appointment as “a great privilege and honor.”

“It is an awesome situation,” Ridley-Tree said. “When I look at all the people who are on the board and how competent they are, and now to find myself as chair, I must say I hope I do a good job. I hope that I can add something to the board. I hope that I can gather enthusiasm. I would like to build a better bridge with our community. The university is such wonderful mother, if you will, for our community, and really such an important part of Santa Barbara.”

“We are honored that Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree has assumed the chairship of our UC Santa Barbara Foundation Board of Trustees,” said Chancellor Henry T. Yang. “Lady Leslie is a world citizen, and a local community leader, who epitomizes the highest ideals of our university. We are inspired by her passion for transforming lives through education, the arts and science, as well as her philanthropic leadership. She is an ambassador for UC Santa Barbara, with a vision and a big heart. We are fortunate to have her leadership and partnership, including her continuing role as our campaign co-chair.”

Ridley-Tree has been engaged with the campus for some 20 years, drawn in by her passion for education and a desire to support students. In 1998 she established a scholarship for outstanding students facing some barrier to education — either financial need or learning disabilities. Since its inception, the Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree Endowment Fund has supported hundreds of such students at UCSB.

“I love the students at UCSB and the diversity of students,” Ridley-Tree said in an interview. “The students I’ve supported are those that have difficulty and I love to see them flower and go on and do wonderful things. Meeting those scholarship recipients each year is a great privilege. I think that it’s just so exciting to see young people grow and contribute in different ways.

“I don’t think that civilization can survive without different forms of education,” she continued. “There are so many exciting things in the world today — things that may be beyond our comprehension — but the world is so full and there is so much to explore. When I see the possibilities for these students — students who have struggled so hard to get to UCSB — it’s awesome. It’s wonderful.”

Ridley-Tree’s philanthropy to the campus also includes frequent support for UCSB Arts & Lectures, where she also serves on the Council for Arts & Lectures, as well as the Department of Music. She has been a trustee since 2002.

“We are tremendously grateful to Leslie Ridley-Tree, our longtime foundation trustee, for her leadership of the foundation board at this time,” said Beverly Colgate, associate vice chancellor for university development. “She brings great vision and insight to the board, as well as deep Santa Barbara community connections. As one of the most prominent Santa Barbara philanthropists, Leslie understands the importance of the local community’s investment and engagement in the university to further advance the teaching, research and public service mission of our campus. In her role as our campaign co-chair, our alumni and parents delighted in her public endorsements of the university and she gained a strong respect nationally from our constituents. Lady Ridley-Tree is simply wonderful, caring and a joy to support and work with.”

The UC Santa Barbara Foundation is a leadership body that promotes the university by increasing philanthropy, and managing and growing the endowment. As UCSB’s principal fundraising organization, the nonprofit foundation generates and administers private gifts to the campus, including support for students, research and

instruction. It also ensures the appropriate use of all private funds.

Helping to forge links between the professional and business communities and the campus to increase private support for university programs, the foundation plays a critical role in promoting and achieving fundraising goals and priorities. The board consists of philanthropic leaders sharing a commitment to advance UCSB's mission and sustain its reputation for excellence.

Of her own philanthropic philosophy, Ridley-Tree said: "I've never thought of it as giving back but, simply, as giving, or sharing. And if the need is there, hopefully you have the privilege of sharing."

"The trustees are all caring people and that's really all that you have — a good backbone of people who are all there because they really care," she added of her UC Santa Barbara Foundation colleagues. "And to work with Henry Yang is a great privilege. He's a man who has taken the university to a high that is so spectacular. What he has brought to the campus is magnificent."

Ridley-Tree attended Columbia University, the University of Madrid and the University of West Los Angeles. For seven years, she was director of a community center on New York City's West Side and established the first Head Start program, as well as the Bridge Academy for teens expelled from public school. She is chief executive officer and chair of Pacific Air Industries in Santa Monica, and a trustee of the Ridley-Tree Foundation. She and her late husband, Lord Paul Ridley-Tree, shared the Philanthropist of the Year Award presented by the National Society of Fund Raising Executives in 1994 and the Santa Barbara News-Press Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993.

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.