UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

October 9, 2017
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‘Think Big’

George Holbrook, local resident, venture investor and philanthropist, has pledged a $4 million bequest from his estate to fund continued support of the Holbrook Foundation Fellowships he created in 2011.

Holbrook, with a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Cornell University, found an ideal outlet for his charitable giving in UC Santa Barbara’s Institute for Energy Efficiency (IEE).

“My charitable objective has always been to support exceptional people,” said Holbrook, also a UC Santa Barbara Foundation trustee. “It’s all future-oriented and it feels good to do it. I expect great things, of course, and we’ve had really bright students — great future engineers and scientists. The fellows by and large have been an impressive group that hopefully will do some good in the world. I want them to think big. Hopefully they will in fact change the world.”

That’s the aim, asserted IEE Director John Bowers, a professor of electrical and computer engineering and holder of the Fred Kavli Chair in Nanotechnology.

“If you want to build a strong university you need the right faculty, and once you have good faculty, to get great results you need great students,” Bowers said. “George recognized that early on and wanted to help out. He’s doing this to get really outstanding results. These are things you can’t necessarily plan for, but he sets high expectations. Having ambitious goals is really good for the students — it can motivate them to do something really significant to make the world a better

place. And these are students who will get fellowship offers from pretty much everyplace they apply, so thanks to George, this allows us to be competitive with other institutions.

“Typically, we’ll have one fellow working on more efficient LEDs, one on more efficient solar panels, one on data centers, one on photonics and electronics and so on,” Bowers explained. “All the different aspects are represented, and they’re all important. These are important technologies for all of us and how we live, so we’re not depleting our precious oil and gas reserves and wasting them in ways that don’t make sense. It’s about getting us to live on a better plane than we are right now.”

The fellows are selected by a committee of the IEE Solution Group Heads — typically six each year — one for each of those solutions groups: lighting, production and storage, sustainability, electronics and photonics, computing, and buildings and design.

Designed to assist faculty in drawing to UCSB outstanding prospects with a research focus in energy efficiency, the competitive fellowships provide a quarterly stipend, additive to the student’s existing funding over their first year. It also includes a paid summer research position, participation in select institute events and meetings with select visiting speakers. Fellows must give a short seminar during the academic year.

“It is a special pleasure to extend sincere thanks on behalf of the UCSB College of Engineering to George Holbrook for providing a bequest to support, in perpetuity, the Holbrook Foundation Fellowships he created in 2011,” said Dean Rod Alferness. “His initial gift has provided indispensable support to 32 graduate students in the six vitally important areas of IEE research. This new gift ensures that generations of students will follow them, making a difference while carrying forward Holbrook’s vision for a better world.”

For the past 40 years, Holbrook has been a managing partner of Bradley Resources Company LLC, a private investment company which organizes and finances ventures in technology, medical devices and natural resource and power plant development, and manages a portfolio of public companies. He has provided capital and guidance to start-up and early stage companies primarily in the energy, natural resource and medical and industrial technology industries.

Chairman of the board of Thingap for 15 years, a local developer and producer of efficient electric motors Holbrook also has served as a director of the Merrill Lynch Institutional fund and chaired the endowment investment committee at Alfred University. Until recently he served on the endowment committee of the Music Academy of the West and on the Board of Unite to Light. He is a past recipient of the Venky Narayanamurti Entrepreneurial Leadership Award from UCSB's Technology Management Program.

Tags
Energy Efficiency

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.