UC SANTA BARBARA

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Life’s Work

The numbers don’t lie: Wade Clark Roof is a bona fide expert in his field. Over the course of his illustrious career as an academic and thought leader in religious studies, he has published 14 books, written over 130 articles and given hundreds of interviews.

Now, for all that work, Roof, an emeritus professor in UC Santa Barbara’s Department of Religious Studies, has received a lifetime achievement award from the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR). The award, given annually, recognizes major intellectual contributions as well as contributions through service, mentoring and teaching.

Roof is perhaps best known as one of the leading national voices on the baby boomer generation and on questions of religious pluralism. He also was instrumental in the founding of UCSB’s Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion and Public Life, where he served as director for 15 years.

“This prize is a truly extraordinary achievement and I’m thrilled that Professor Roof’s career has been recognized by the association,” said Kathleen Moore, chair of UCSB’s Department of Religious Studies. “He is a prolific contributor to the sociology of religion who has shaped the teaching and public understanding of American religion not only across the nation but around the world.”

Despite his many scholarly accomplishments, Roof points to one pivotal moment as helping to raise his profile. “Especially rewarding was the call I received from the

White House during the Clinton presidency asking if the president might quote the title of one of my books — “A Generation of Seekers” — in his State of the Union address to describe the large boomer population that was setting the trends in the country at the time,” he recalled. “That one quote in the political arena was worth more than a dozen references in academic journals in gaining public recognition as a social commentator early in my career.”

Roof, whose books are cited frequently as examples of scholarship that have shaped subsequent writing on trends in the American spiritual landscape, is also known for his analysis of religion in the contemporary political scene and his examinations of generational dynamics within religious communities of the late 20th century. He will receive his award at the ASR’s annual meeting in August.

“It is pleasing of course when a scholarly group such as the ASR thinks your work and career is deserving of recognition,” Roof said, adding (with his signature good humor), “but the notion of a ‘Lifetime Achievement’ also has an ominous ring about it —your peers are beginning to think of you in terms of your overall achievement, which is pretty close to relegating you to the past.”

Roof’s colleagues disagree, contending that this accolade only heralds even greater things to come. “He belongs to the pantheon of giants in the field of the sociology of religion, and continues to be influential,” said Moore. “This lifetime achievement award testifies to that.”

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.