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Three UCSB professors elected as members of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

Three distinguished UC Santa Barbara faculty members have been elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Oceanographer Alice L. Alldredge, astrophysicist Lars Bildsten and engineer Henry T. Yang are among the 252 leaders in academia, the arts, industry, journalism, philanthropy, policy, research and science elected as new members in 2026.

The Academy, chartered in 1780, was established to recognize accomplished individuals and engage them in addressing the greatest challenges facing the young republic. The first members elected to the Academy include George Washington, who said — in his first annual message to Congress in 1790 — “Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness.”

“Dr. Alldredge, Dr. Bildsten and Dr. Yang reflect the eminence and dynamism of the UC Santa Barbara faculty,” said UCSB Chancellor Dennis Assanis. “They are leaders in their fields who have made indelible contributions through visionary scholarship, trailblazing research, transformative teaching and academic leadership. Our university community is proud of their achievements and thrilled to see them join more than 40 other UCSB faculty members in the Academy.”

Alldredge, a professor emeritus of ecology, evolution and marine biology, is a prolific researcher with a particular focus on the role of marine snow in the ecology of the sea. She is credited with discovering Transparent Exopolymer Particles (TEP) and demersal zooplankton, among other advances. She is a former primary investigator with the Moorea Coral Reef Long Term Ecological Research study in French Polynesia, where she studied the role of zooplankton in coral reef food webs. Alldredge is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of the American Geophysical Union, and a previous recipient of the Henry Bryant Bigelow Medal from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and the G. Evelyn Hutchinson Award from the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography.

Bildsten is director of UCSB's Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics and the Gluck Professor of Theoretical Physics. He is a theoretical astrophysicist recognized for his work on the properties and behaviors of stars, both when they are burning their thermonuclear fuel for billions of years and when they explode as supernovae or emit gravitational waves. His many honors have included the Helen B. Warner Prize from the American Astronomical Society, the Dannie Heineman Prize for Astrophysics and election to the National Academy of Sciences. Bildsten is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Physical Society and the American Astronomical Society.

Yang, chancellor emeritus of UCSB, is a distinguished professor of mechanical engineering with particular research expertise in solid mechanics, materials and structures, dynamic systems and control, and micro and nanotechnology, as well as aerospace structures, structural dynamics, composite materials, finite elements, transonic aeroelasticity, wind and earthquake structural engineering, and intelligent manufacturing systems. He has authored or co-authored more than 190 articles for scientific journals, as well as a widely used textbook on finite element structural analysis. He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and a fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, the American Society for Engineering Education and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

"We celebrate the achievement of each new member and the collective breadth and depth of their excellence — this is a fitting commemoration of the nation's 250th anniversary," said Academy President Laurie Patton. "The founding of the nation and the Academy are rooted in the inextricable links between a vibrant democracy, the free pursuit of knowledge, and the expansion of the public good."

The Academy has not wavered in its commitment to recognizing excellence, but its membership has changed through the increasing diversity of its members and the broader array of expertise they possess.

“We invite all of our members to celebrate their election and to join in the Academy’s work advancing the common good across the arts, democracy, education, global affairs, and science,” said Chair of the Board Goodwin Liu, Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court. “Our nonpartisan and interdisciplinary commitment to knowledge and democracy began in 1780 and continues in 2026 with pursuits never more important than they are now. We know such endeavors will be expanded and deepened by these newest members.”

Induction ceremonies for new members will take place in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in October 2026.

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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.