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Alumni gift, vision powers plans for a multifaceted climate solutions hub at UCSB

Alumna Linda (La Kretz ‘77) Duttenhaver and her late father, Morton La Kretz, have made a major new gift to UC Santa Barbara to help establish a community hub for translating environmental research into practical policy. Planned for West Campus, the La Kretz Environmental Crossroads, as it will be called, will bring together scientists, scholars and industry experts from various fields to develop and launch sustainable solutions for the environment.

The project adds to a rich family legacy of support for environmental causes at UCSB and elsewhere. Morton La Kretz had a long history of philanthropy at UCLA among many other places across Los Angeles.

“This is the fulfillment of a dream,” said Duttenhaver, a member of the UCSB Foundation Board of Trustees. “I am very happy and proud to support this project. It is being named after my Dad, who passed away a few months ago at 100 years old. We talked about this project over the previous years and he was very excited about it.”

A donor to UCSB for nearly two decades, Duttenhaver’s generosity includes gifts to Sedgwick Reserve, to renovate and restore its historic barn and Ranch House and, with her father, to establish the La Kretz Research Center. She has also supported

UCSB’s restoration efforts at North Campus Open Space as well as the Education Abroad Program. The La Kretz Environmental Crossroads is her biggest undertaking yet.

“The La Kretz Environmental Crossroads is a visionary investment that will further elevate UC Santa Barbara’s standing as an interdisciplinary convener and global leader in our quest to develop innovative and lasting climate solutions,” said UCSB Chancellor Dennis Assanis. “We are deeply grateful to Linda Duttenhaver for her extraordinary partnership and are so proud that this landmark hub will honor the legacy of her father, Morton La Kretz.”

Significantly, the Crossroads will also help to revitalize the university’s West Campus, aligning perfectly with Duttenhaver’s passion for restoration in the broadest sense of the word. Planned for the Devereux site on West Campus, it includes renovation of three aging, unused structures nestled in a significant environmental landscape — making the project itself a working model for addressing the sustainability challenges that UCSB hopes it will help to solve.

Backed by mountains, the site faces the ocean and UCSB’s Coal Oil Point Reserve, looking out toward a marine protected area and, Duttenhaver noted, “onto the very spot where the environmental movement was born: the giant oil spill in 1969 in the Santa Barbara Channel.”

“I knew that I wanted to do something environmental, but I didn’t even know what the ‘something’ was,” Duttenhaver said. “Over time, it evolved into this idea of ‘*the place*’ for all things environmental — a community-centered space for NGO’s, government, non-profits, UCSB and other organizations to address the planet’s most pressing environmental issues.”

Once completed, the new facility will provide a permanent space for collaboration and showcase the university’s work in environmental leadership and climate action.

“The La Kretz family has long championed California's environment, and Linda's gift carries that legacy forward in an inspiring way,” said UCSB Associate Vice Chancellor for Innovation Kelly Caylor, a professor in the Department of Geography and at the Bren School for Environmental Science & Management. “It empowers our campus to create a focused place where great environmental science will accelerate into real-world impact by connecting our researchers and students with the agencies, communities and partners who put solutions to work. We are honored by her vision

and thrilled to bring the Crossroads to life.”

Tags
Climate Change

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