

## New Sally Ride Fellowship to Support Women in Physics

### Professor Brian Keating and wife, Sarah, provide lead gift to launch fellowship

An explorer, scientist and public servant, the late astronaut Sally Ride dedicated her career to the betterment of human kind. At UC San Diego, where Ride served as a professor, a new graduate fellowship established in her name aims to inspire future generations of boundary-breaking physicists who will contribute to the public good.

UC San Diego physics professor Brian Keating and his wife, Sarah Price-Keating, have provided a \$50,000 lead gift to fund the *Sally Ride Graduate Fellowship for the Advancement of Women in Physics*. When fully funded, the \$250,000 endowment will provide a stipend of \$10,000 per year to a future scientific leader.

“We thought this would be a great way to honor Sally Ride’s accomplishments and at the same time, motivate young scientists,” said Brian Keating. “We hope that UC San Diego students will be inspired by her contributions to science and society.”

Ride made history and captured the nation’s imagination when, blasting aboard Space Shuttle *Challenger* in 1983, she became the first American woman in space. She joined the UC San Diego faculty in 1989 and served as an emeritus professor of physics until her death in 2012.

The campus has a legacy of recruiting extraordinary women in physics, the Keatings said. Maria Mayer, who won the Nobel Prize in Physics while at UC San Diego, and Margaret Burbidge, who received the National Medal of Science, were among the first professors hired at the campus. Today,



*Sarah Price-Keating and Brian Keating*

the number of female physicists—both faculty members and students—continues to grow. At the undergraduate level, the population of female physics majors has nearly tripled in recent years, from 36 students in 2008 to 101 students in the 2015 fall quarter.

Overall, UC San Diego has more female STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) graduates than any other college in the U.S. with one in three women graduating from the university with a degree in these fields.

Yet, physics remains a male-dominated field. The proportion of women at the graduate and postgraduate level is just over 20 percent, according to data compiled by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health.

“Access and equity at all levels of education is at the core of our campus strategic vision,” said Becky Petitt, vice chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. “The Sally Ride Graduate Fellowship will help us continue our progress in improving the representation of women in STEM fields.”

Brian Keating explained that it was the astronauts of the 1960s and 70s that inspired his own career. Growing up, he was fascinated by aviation and astronomy. He became a pilot and earned his Ph.D. with the intention of becoming an astronaut. While he didn’t end up traveling to space, he credits that early vision with motivating him to get to where he is now: exploring the universe as an astrophysicist at UC San Diego.

For Chelsey Dorow, a fourth year doctoral student studying experimental condensed matter physics, having exceptional female physicists to look up to has been a strong source of encouragement as she works toward her degree. She also credits the Harold K. Ticho Award, a fellowship she received as an incoming graduate student, with giving her an extra boost of confidence.

“The fellowship provided me with a lot of motivation and focus for my research,” she said. “I’ve been fortunate to have many female scientists who have inspired me both as an undergraduate and graduate student, including many of my female classmates. For other young women considering a physics degree, I would say go for it—and don’t give up easily!”

The Sally Ride fellowship is the most recent in a series of efforts to honor Ride’s legacy of exploration and education, while motivating the next generation of scientists. Sally Ride Science, a science education company she co-founded in 2001, is now based at UC San Diego Extension. Research vessel *Sally Ride*, operated by Scripps Institution of Oceanography, was officially commissioned last fall and is currently at sea, providing valuable research opportunities for students. And last year, a gift from the Alice C. Tyler Perpetual Trust established an endowed undergraduate scholarship, in honor of Ride, for the advancement of women in science.

The Keatings' gift provides the initial funding to establish the *Sally Ride Graduate Fellowship for the Advancement of Women in Physics*. Additional contributions are still needed to fully endow the fellowship so that it will support UC San Diego graduate students in perpetuity. To learn more, call (858) 534-8305 or email

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