

July 26, 2016 | By Jade Griffin

Local Philanthropist and UC San Diego Supporter Conrad Prebys Dies

University of California San Diego friend and supporter, Conrad Prebys died on Sunday, July 24, following a battle with cancer. The San Diego philanthropist and businessman was 82.

Over the span of more than four decades, Prebys had a successful career as a real estate developer and property manager in San Diego, with a focus on affordable housing. Named one of the 25 most generous people in the world by *Business Insider* in 2012, Prebys made a wide-ranging impact with philanthropic giving in areas ranging from education and the arts, to health sciences and medicine, to wildlife preservation.



Conrad Prebys

At UC San Diego, Prebys made a significant impact on the Department of Music, establishing the world-class Conrad Prebys Music Center, as well as the Conrad Prebys Music Endowment, with gifts totaling \$9 million. The Conrad Prebys Concert Hall, one of the world's best small concert halls situated within the Conrad Prebys Music Center, was also named in his honor to recognize his generosity. Most recently, Prebys established the *Conrad Prebys Presidential Chair in Music*—the first endowed faculty chair in the Department of Music—to support scholarly activity and graduate fellowships. Prebys supported a variety of campus areas including Moores Cancer Center and Jacobs Medical Center at UC San Diego Health, as well as The Preuss School UCSD.

“I am deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Conrad Prebys, a dear friend and a steadfast supporter of UC San Diego for many years,” said UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “Conrad touched so many lives through his generosity and kindness, and has left a lasting impact on our campus, our community and our world. We will miss him immensely and cherish his legacy. From his support that created the Conrad Prebys Music Center at UC San Diego to his philanthropic gifts that benefited health sciences and many other fields and organizations, he improved the quality of life of our campus and community members and forever changed the landscape of San Diego.”

Rand Steiger, chair of the Department of Music and holder of the *Conrad Prebys Presidential Chair in Music*, shared Prebys' love of music and inspired him to support the university's programs. Steiger said, "Mr. Prebys was an incredibly generous and humble man. He made a fortune by building apartment complexes that were well maintained and rented at reasonable rates, and he continued to live quite modestly even after he became a billionaire. He gave away hundreds of millions of dollars to many organizations, and the UC San Diego Music Department is among those that have benefited from his largesse."

Steiger continued: "When he spoke at the opening of the Conrad Prebys Music Center, he talked about how lucky he felt to be able to help us with such an exciting project. The last time I visited with Mr. Prebys it was at his office—a very small room located in one of his apartment complexes. The office had a modest desk and a couch that had clearly seen better days. I would later learn that the couch was the one he'd slept on when he first moved to San Diego, and he kept as a reminder of his early struggles and humble origins. I feel fortunate to have known him and very sad to say goodbye. Generations of students will benefit from his gifts to us, and here at UC San Diego, as in the city more broadly, he will not be forgotten."

Prebys' generosity and leadership spanned far beyond UC San Diego. His transformational community support included gifts to the San Diego Zoo, Scripps Health, the Old Globe Theatre, San Diego State University, Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute, Boys and Girls Club, KPBS, the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, the San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego Opera and the Salk Institute, among others.

Born in South Bend, IN, in 1933, Prebys moved to San Diego in 1965. He went on to build a successful business as the owner of Progress Construction Company, which focused, not only on real estate development and property management, but also on providing affordable housing for the community.

The family released the following statement: "Born with a giving spirit, Conrad's deep generosity has helped strengthen and enrich the community in many important ways, including health care, medical research, music, theater, youth services, and wildlife preservation. Survivors include life partner Debbie Turner."

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