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Astrophysicist Steven Boggs Named Dean of Division of Physical Sciences

Steven E. Boggs, chair of the top-ranked physics department at UC Berkeley, has been appointed dean of UC San Diego's Division of Physical Sciences.

An experimental astrophysicist, he officially began his tenure as dean and as a professor of physics in UC San Diego's Center for Astrophysics and Space Sciences, known as CASS, on January 1, 2017. He also holds the Chancellor's Associates Endowed Chair in Physics.

Boggs is the second permanent dean of the division, which includes a Nobel Laureate and Fields Medalist among its current faculty and which has experienced substantial growth in its research and education programs since its founding in 2000. He follows Mark Thiemens, a chemistry and biochemistry professor who served for 16 years as the division's founding dean. Jeffrey Rummel, a mathematics professor and associate dean, served as interim dean from July 2016 until the end of last year.



Steven E. Boggs Photo by Erik Jepsen, UC San Diego

Boggs was recruited following a year-long national search after Thiemens announced his decision to step down to spend more time on his research. Boggs has since 2013 headed UC Berkeley's Department of Physics, which ranked number one in the world in the 2014 and 2015 Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities and number two in the 2016 U.S. News Best

Global Universities ranking. He also served from 2001 to 2013 as associate director of the university's Space Sciences Laboratory and from 2001 to 2006 as associate director of Berkeley's California Space Institute.

"Steven Boggs' leadership of Berkeley's physics department and his strong record of achievement as a scientist and educator demonstrate his ability to lead UC San Diego's Division of Physical Sciences at this critical time," said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. "The physical sciences play an essential role in our efforts to push the frontiers of knowledge and address our world's most pressing challenges."

From 2000 to 2015, research expenditures in the division—which includes the Departments of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Mathematics, and Physics—grew from \$19.6-million to \$53.86-million, a 175 percent increase, while the total number of PhD students grew from 315 to 470, an increase of 49 percent.

"Steven Boggs is a superb addition to UC San Diego's academic leadership team," said Peter Cowhey, interim executive vice chancellor. His deep commitment to excellence, equity, diversity and inclusion and his strong track record as a skilled administrator, natural collaborator and outstanding scholar at UC Berkeley will serve him well in his new role as Dean of the Division of Physical Sciences."

Boggs received his bachelor's degree in physics in 1991 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and his PhD in physics from UC Berkeley in 1998. He spent two-years as a prestigious Millikan postdoctoral fellow at Caltech, then returned to Berkeley in 2001 as an assistant professor, where he was quickly recognized for his excellence as a scientist and educator. He received a Hellman Family Faculty Award in 2002 and from 2007 to 2008 was named a UC Berkeley Presidential Chair for teaching excellence. In 2014, he was named a Fellow of the American Physical Society.

As an experimental high-energy astrophysicist, Boggs' specialty is in developing X-ray, gamma-ray and cosmic-ray instruments to study physical processes in the universe. "My primary interest is the detailed measurement of radioactive nuclei produced in the inner regions of supernova explosions as probes of the fundamental physical processes in which they are created," he said. "Through their conversion of gravitational energy to nuclear energy, supernovae are the dominant engines of evolution in the universe—controlling the production of the elements making up the world around us, the internal structure of galaxies and the acceleration of cosmic rays."

“We are really lucky to have Steve coming to UC San Diego and CASS,” said George Fuller, a professor of physics and the director of CASS. “His balloon-borne high energy astronomy and novel indirect dark matter detection experiments are exciting and will take our science in new directions. Physical science at UC San Diego has been very fortunate to have had Mark Thiemens at the helm. Steve Boggs will continue this tradition of inspired scientific leadership.”

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