

## Rita and Richard Atkinson, Former UC President, Give \$5.7 Million to UC San Diego

*Gift largest to date for Invent the Future, UC San Diego's student support campaign*

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Richard Atkinson - former president of the ten-campus University of California system and chancellor at the University of California, San Diego from 1980-1995 - has designated, with his wife Rita, \$5.7 million to support fellowships for graduate students at UC San Diego. The gift represents the largest gift to date for "Invent the Future: The UC San Diego Student Support Campaign," an initiative to raise \$50 million for undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships at the university. The UC San Diego Foundation has been designated the charitable income beneficiary of the Atkinsons' charitable lead trust, which will provide gifts over time in excess of \$5.4 million to establish the *Rita L. Atkinson Graduate Fellowship Fund*. The permanent endowed fund will provide perpetual annual income in support of fellowships - graduate level scholarships - for students engaged in interdisciplinary studies in the sciences and related fields leading to a Ph.D. at UC San Diego. The couple also pledged \$350,000 for the *Atkinson Expendable Graduate Fellowship Fund*, which provides current use funds for fellowships until the endowment is fully funded. "We are extremely grateful to Rita and Richard Atkinson for their visionary gift that will have a significant impact on our students' lives, our graduate programs and the university for generations to come," said Chancellor Marye Anne Fox. "This generous endowed fellowship fund will benefit students who will go on to make a difference as leaders and innovators locally, nationally and globally."

"Rita and I have always been committed to supporting the excellence of UC San Diego," said Richard Atkinson. "One very important aspect of that excellence is the ability to attract quality graduate students - they are a key ingredient to what makes a world-class university. But the campus is in tough competition with schools such as Harvard and Stanford for top graduate students. Private schools often have much larger endowments and are able to provide many more fellowships. Our hope with this fellowship gift is to at least begin to correct that problem at UC San Diego." Graduate students spur innovation and research at a university, in addition to playing a critical role in undergraduate instruction. Many become the next generation of scholars in academia, others become leaders in industry and government. Yet currently, UC San Diego is only able to provide fellowships to 16 percent of its graduate students. Financial support for UC San Diego graduate students is 30 percent lower than competitor schools; factor in San Diego's high cost of living, and the inequities are magnified. The purpose of the funds provided by the Atkinsons is to support interdisciplinary science studies that cross traditional boundaries. "The generous support provided from the *Rita L. Atkinson Graduate Fellowships* will greatly enhance our ability to recruit the best and the brightest to our graduate programs in the sciences, particularly for students pursuing interdisciplinary work," said Kim Barrett, dean of the Office of Graduate Studies. "We are particularly excited about this opportunity because some of the most important research advances are occurring at the interfaces between different disciplines, and graduate students are frequently the 'glue' that holds together collaborations between faculty." Graduate student Ayana Johnson, who is seeking her Ph.D. in marine biology at UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, knows firsthand the positive impact fellowships can have. "Fellowship support has allowed me complete academic freedom. Field work is incredibly expensive and I would not have been able to pursue an unconventional dissertation topic without a fellowship." Johnson is currently conducting field research in Curaçao, studying the impact of sustainable management of fishing on coral reefs. Her interdisciplinary research involves not only classical ecological experiments, but also socioeconomic surveys of fishermen in the region. The Atkinsons' gift contributes to the Invent the Future student support campaign,

a three-year effort to raise \$50 million to support graduate students like Johnson, as well as undergraduate students. Thanks to generous alumni, donors, faculty, staff and friends, UC San Diego raised \$17 million for scholarship and fellowship support during 2009-10, the first year of the campaign. "Great universities fuel the economy, spark medical and research breakthroughs and drive the excellence of the country," noted Atkinson. "By supporting students now, we are establishing the underpinnings for the future."

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