

## **\$6.5M Gift Establishes Laboratory at UC San Diego for Regenerative Ophthalmology**

**New lab at Shiley Eye Center will investigate biomedical advances to reverse vision loss and blindness**



A \$6.5 million gift from a grateful patient will create the *Richard C. Atkinson Laboratory for Regenerative Ophthalmology* in the department of ophthalmology at the UC San Diego [Shiley Eye Center](#). The new lab will investigate cell replacement therapies, tissue engineering and other biomedical advances to reverse vision loss and blindness. Work conducted at the lab will utilize novel stem cell approaches that are consistent with the vision of the newly created Sanford Clinical Stem Cell Center at UC San Diego, which was announced in late 2013.

“This significant gift will provide UC San Diego the foundation for innovation as researchers at the Shiley Eye Center employ a multi-disciplinary approach that integrates ophthalmology, vision research, bioengineering, neurosciences and stem cell biology,” said UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla.

The donor chose to name the laboratory in honor of Richard Atkinson, former University of California president and UC San Diego chancellor, for his lasting impact not only on UC San Diego, but also on the entire UC system. A professor emeritus of cognitive science and psychology, Atkinson served as

president of the UC system from 1995 to 2003. Before becoming president, he served for 15 years as chancellor of UC San Diego. He is a former director of the National Science Foundation.

The UC San Diego department of ophthalmology at the Shiley Eye Center is the only academic eye center in the region offering the most advanced treatments across all areas of eye care. World class clinicians, surgeons, scientists and staff are dedicated to excellence and providing the best possible patient care to prevent, treat and cure eye diseases. The center's research is at the forefront of developing new methods for diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases and disorders.

Goals for the new *Richard C. Atkinson Laboratory for Regenerative Ophthalmology* include:

- Restoring vision and regenerating diseased tissue in glaucoma, macular degeneration and other eye diseases;
- Storing and archiving surgical and other specimens including adult stem cells; and
- Integrating biomedical engineering approaches into vision therapies.

Many of the most difficult to treat eye diseases result from the loss of nerve cells, such as retinal ganglion cells in glaucoma and other types of cell such as photoreceptors in macular degeneration. Other problems that patients face with eye disease, from scarring to surgical healing, may be greatly improved by novel cell or tissue treatments. Cells derived from patients provide an unprecedented opportunity to uncover the underlying causes of eye disease and to test treatments on the way to human trials.

Overseeing the research activities at the new *Richard C. Atkinson Laboratory for Regenerative Ophthalmology* will be clinician, surgeon and scientist Dr. Robert N. Weinreb. He is chairman and distinguished professor of ophthalmology at UC San Diego, director of the Shiley Eye Center, director of the Hamilton Glaucoma Center and holds the Morris Gleich Chair of Glaucoma. Weinreb has served as president of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (2002-2003), president of the World Glaucoma Association (WGA) (2004-2006) and President of the American Glaucoma Society (2007 - 2009). He graduated from Harvard Medical School and completed his residency and fellowship at the University of California, San Francisco.

“This gift will enhance our vigorous engagement in discovery and translational research,” Weinreb said. “It reaffirms the UC San Diego Shiley Eye Center as a groundbreaking scientific



Robert Weinreb

and clinical hub, committed to improved treatments and the prevention and cure of blinding eye diseases in our community and around the world.”

For nearly 30 years, philanthropic support from generous individuals, foundations and corporations has provided the UC San Diego department of ophthalmology at the Shiley Eye Center with valuable resources for patient care, research, education and community service. With private support, the facility will continue to revolutionize eye care treatment and provide cutting edge medical therapy to all those afflicted with debilitating vision disorders. To learn more, visit the [Shiley Eye Center website](#) or call 858-534-8017.

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