

UC San Diego Names First George Palade Endowed Chair

Distinguished cell biologist Peter Novick Ph.D. appointed Professor of Cellular and Molecular Medicine

September 24, 2008

Debra Kain

Peter Novick, Ph.D., whose groundbreaking work in the field of cell biology has contributed to a novel understanding of internal cellular transportation systems, has been named the George E. Palade Endowed Chair of Cellular and Molecular Medicine at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. Novick joins UC San Diego from Yale University, where he was a professor in the Department of Cell Biology at the School of Medicine for more than 20 years. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The George E. Palade Endowed Chair was established in 2006 to recognize UCSD School of Medicine's first Dean for Scientific Affairs, Nobel Laureate George Palade, M.D., who is considered to be the father of modern cell biology. Palade retired in 2001 at the age of 88 and remained an advisor to the Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences and Dean of the UCSD School of Medicine for some years.

"Our goal was to identify an outstanding cell biologist to hold this chair, who exemplified the characteristics that George Palade has manifested throughout his scientific career - outstanding research accomplishments, high research standards and impeccable integrity," said Marilyn G. Farquhar, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor and Chair of UCSD's Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine. "Dr. Novick is such a candidate and is also a highly appropriate person to hold this chair because the main scientific contributions for which he is known are in the very same field that Dr. Palade established through his Nobel Prize-winning work."

"I am tremendously excited to be back in the UC system since I started my career at UC Berkeley as graduate student," said Novick. "It is a particularly thrilling honor to be appointed as the George Palade Chair. During my graduate training and formative years as a junior faculty member at Yale, George was always my hero and keenly insightful advisor. He started our field of membrane traffic and challenged us all to bring the field to the advanced level of mechanistic detail that it has since attained."

Novick's research combines genetics and cell biology in yeast to investigate mechanisms that regulate membrane trafficking along the secretory pathway, a series of steps used to move proteins out of a cell. Membrane traffic is required for many essential functions, and its regulation is directly relevant to a broad range of human diseases including cancer, diabetes and neural degeneration.

He discovered the first Rab protein, called Sec4 (a member of a family of proteins involved in membrane trafficking) in yeast and demonstrated that this protein is essential for fusing secretory vesicles - structures that store and transport cellular products - with the cell membrane. This and other notable accomplishments in the field of membrane trafficking have had broad implications for cell biology, biochemistry and genetics. In future years, Novick's laboratory will address the mechanisms by which different stages of intracellular membrane traffic are coordinated and regulated.

Palade came to UC San Diego from Yale University in 1990. He created one of the preeminent molecular cell biology programs in the nation at UC San Diego and served as a Professor of Cellular and Molecular Medicine and Dean of Scientific Affairs until his retirement in 2001. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or

Medicine in 1974 for his contributions to the understanding of cell structure, chemistry and function, a prize he shared with Albert Claude and Christian de Duve.

The George E. Palade Endowed Chair was established by friends and colleagues and the Richard Lounsbery Foundation. The chair is supported by the Margaret Shaw Roberts Fund created by a bequest from the Joseph N. Roberts Estate.

Media Contact: Debra Kain, 619-543-6163

