

## **UC San Diego Establishes Faculty Chair in Modern Greek History; Renowned Scholar Thomas Gallant Named Inaugural Chair Holder**

*University of California, San Diego becomes one of the first universities in the nation to have endowed faculty chairs in all three major eras of Greek History*

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To Penelope and George Nicholas, the history of Greece is a continuous story lasting over 3,000 years; it is the story of an ancient heart that is still alive and beating.

The couple-members of San Diego's Greek community since the early 1960s-showed pride in their heritage by taking the lead in funding the final chair in a trio of endowed Greek history faculty chairs that will position the University of California, San Diego as a global leader in comprehensive Greek studies. With their gifts, the Nicholas family, including sons James and Nick, helped to establish the \$500,000 *Nicholas Family Endowed Chair in Modern Greek History* in UC San Diego's Department of History.

The Modern Greek History chair, emphasizing the study of Greek history from circa 1768 to present, will not only celebrate the 17 million people of Greek heritage around the world, but also provide an opportunity to link that heritage with Ancient and Byzantine Greek history. The endowment made it possible for UCSD to bring distinguished scholar Thomas Gallant to campus to teach Modern Greek history and culture, as well as pursue research in this important field.

"UC San Diego is indeed fortunate to have generous friends who understand the importance of Greek culture by supporting endowed faculty chairs in three eras of Greek history-Ancient, Byzantine and Modern," said John Marino, chair of the UCSD Department of History in the Division of Arts and Humanities. "Not only has our Department achieved national and international recognition in many areas of study, now with Thomas Gallant as the inaugural chair holder for the *Nicholas Family Endowed Chair in Modern Greek History*, our campus is well on its way to becoming a world-class leader in Greek studies. Professor Gallant brings to UCSD a stellar reputation as a scholar, author and teacher, which in turn, will help us attract the best and brightest students to our graduate programs."

Gallant, who received a Ph.D. in Classical Archeology from Cambridge University, melds his Greek heritage with a prestigious academic background in the study of Greece and the Greeks in the Modern era. Most recently, he held the Hellenic Heritage Foundation Chair of Modern Greek History at York University in Toronto, Canada. For 17 years before that, he was professor of Greek history and anthropology at the University of Florida. He has published six books and over 40 scholarly articles.

"My study of Modern Greek history is intensely personal because it connects me to my cultural legacy," said Gallant, a New England native whose mother was from a small village in Greece. "My goal is to help make UC San Diego's History Department the premier program in Greek history in North America. The three endowed faculty chairs will allow us to teach and train students in Greek history across the broad sweep of time in a way that no other institution can. Although it was a difficult decision to leave Toronto, the opportunity to be part of building something special here was certainly a major attraction."

Penny Nicholas added, "My husband and I wanted to get involved when we first heard about the Greek history chairs at UCSD, but it wasn't until our son James underscored the importance of the continuity of Greek history that we decided to help fund the Modern Greek History chair. We want to thank all of the contributors to this project, including members of the San Diego Greek community, other Greek Americans and Philhellenes globally for helping to complete the funding for this and the other two chairs. Like our family, they gave to UC San Diego because they understood the importance of education and Greek history."

Previously, UC San Diego established the *Gerry and Jeannie Ranglas Chair in Ancient Greek History* and the *Alkiviadis Vassiliadis Chair in Byzantine Greek History* with donations totaling more than \$1 million. Contributions from members of San Diego's Greek community and cultural organizations provided the remainder of the funding for all three Greek history chairs. The university's Department of History is currently recruiting to fill the other two endowed chair positions.

The salaries of UC professors are, in most instances, provided by the state as part of California's system of public higher education. The state does not, however, provide sufficient supplemental support for research and innovative teaching projects. Endowed chairs make up the difference, empowering the University of California to remain competitive in keeping and attracting outstanding professors.

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