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Alumna and Husband Give CSUN Record \$7.3 Million Donation

Largest Cash Gift Will Expand Student Scholarships, Aid Performing Arts Center

(NORTHRIDGE, Calif., July 20, 2005) — A former San Fernando High School art teacher who graduated from Cal State Northridge and her husband have donated their entire \$7.3 million estate as a bequest to the university for expanding student scholarships, marking the largest cash and alumni gift in the university's history.

The endowment created by longtime San Fernando Valley residents Mary and Jack Bayramian—who passed away in November 2002 and January 2005, respectively—will fund two major new university scholarship programs, including a \$2.3 million portion to launch student scholarships for the future Valley Performing Arts Center project on the campus.

“This remarkable gift from Mary and Jack Bayramian will empower the university to support outstanding students,” said Cal State Northridge President Jolene Koester. “The Bayramians, who were devoted to each other during more than 60 years of marriage, now have extended that caring to improve the lives of hundreds of our students.”

To honor the gift, the California State University Board of Trustees, meeting today in Long Beach, approved renaming the university's Student Services Building as Bayramian Hall. President Koester called the dedication a fitting tribute, because the building houses the university's scholarship, financial aid and other student support services offices.

“Because Aunt Mary graduated from Cal State Northridge, she had a great feeling for the university,” said Don Barsumian, Mary Bayramian's nephew, who is the couple's trustee. “I think she had a real love for young people and for education. Mary believed in education and she wanted to help. This was her way of helping,” Barsumian said.

Mary and Jack Bayramian each had Armenian parents from Aintab, Turkey, who came to the United States to escape persecution. The two lived near each other as teenagers and graduated together from Hamilton High School in West Los Angeles in 1939, marrying in 1942. After Navy service during World War II, Jack had a 20-year career as a Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Co. technician.

After the war, the couple first lived in Reseda and later bought a Northridge house several blocks west of today's university campus. A homemaker who returned to college in her late 30s, Mary Bayramian attended from 1960 to 1963, earning a bachelor's degree in art and a teaching credential from San Fernando Valley State College, which later became Cal State Northridge.

(more)

Bayramian Gift

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After graduating, Mary Bayramian went on to teach art at nearby San Fernando High School, where she was affectionately known as “Mrs. B,” until the couple retired in 1971. At age 50, they moved to Laguna Beach in Orange County and lived there another 30 years, investing, improving and managing real estate, and settling in an ocean-front home.

The Bayramians led an extraordinarily active life. Mary was an active cook and author of published cookbooks, designed and created her own jewelry, painted and played golf well into her 70s. Bayramian described Jack as the unofficial greeter of Laguna Beach and a “firecracker” who in his younger years was an avid handyman skilled in electrical, carpentry and concrete work.

The couple’s \$7.3 million endowment will create the ***Bayramian Family Scholarship Fund*** at Cal State Northridge and support two major new programs. The earnings from \$5 million of the endowment will fund the newly named ***Mary and Jack Bayramian Presidential Scholars*** and related scholarships within the university’s premier Northridge Scholars Program.

The ***Bayramian Presidential Scholar*** awards, the most prestigious granted by the university, will ultimately go each year to two dozen or more high-achieving upper-division students through a competitive process. Recipients will partner with faculty members on scholarly projects. The scholarships include a \$5,000 award, bookstore discount, priority registration and other perks.

Earnings from the other \$2.3 million will fund ***Mary Bayramian Arts Scholars*** and become the largest gift yet toward ***Imagine the Arts***, the fundraising campaign for the 1,600-seat Valley Performing Arts Center planned for the campus. These scholarships will support upper division and graduate students involved in the project through their courses, internships or related activities.

“Mary Bayramian was an art student at Cal State Northridge, an arts teacher at San Fernando High School, and an artist herself,” said Judy C. Knudson, CSUN’s vice president for university advancement. “She was deeply engaged in the arts, and especially in opening the world of art to others, a goal that will be advanced by the Performing Arts Center project.”

CSUN earlier this month launched the campaign for private funds to match the state dollars that will build/operate the Valley Performing Arts Center, due to open within the next five years. Planned as a signature facility, the center will be the largest venue of its kind in the San Fernando Valley and open the region to high-caliber performances not currently able to perform there.

The university learned only recently that the couple had given CSUN’s largest-ever cash gift after the husband’s passing in January 2005. The university’s prior largest cash gift came from The Eisner Foundation in 2002 when Disney CEO Michael D. Eisner and his wife Jane gave \$7 million to create a new teacher-training program at the campus.

Lili Vidal, the associate director of CSUN’s Financial Aid and Scholarship Department, said the Bayramians’ gift will provide a major boost to the university’s scholarship programs, which last year aided about 1,600 CSUN students based on their talent and achievements. “To have this gift is really fabulous for our students,” Vidal said. “We will help many students with it.”

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Note to Editors: High-resolution photos and other background materials on this gift are available for download from CSUN’s web site at <http://www.csun.edu/pubrels/bayramian/>.