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# UCLA COLLEGE

R E P O R T

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# A Model Concept to Encourage New Scholars

The new Lemelson Anthropological Scholars Program will link faculty and students in relationships that create opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to conduct original field research.

Robert Lemelson's multifaceted career as a psychological anthropologist, educator, and documentary filmmaker is a tribute to both the importance of interdisciplinary research and the value of mentor relationships in scholarly endeavors. Lemelson received his undergraduate degree in biology and anthropology from Hampshire College, where he learned firsthand the importance of being mentored by senior faculty.

At UCLA, Lemelson's doctoral dissertation spanned the fields of medical and psychological anthropology, psychiatry, and Southeast Asian studies; he received his Ph.D. from UCLA in 1999. Currently adjunct professor of anthropology at UCLA and research anthropologist at the Semel Institute of Neuroscience and Human Behavior, Lemelson fueled his passion for synthesizing different scholarly fields by creating and funding several educational programs at UCLA.

Lemelson's latest initiative, beginning in the winter quarter 2012, is the Lemelson Anthropological Scholars Program at UCLA, which will bring together individual faculty, graduate students, and small groups of UCLA undergraduates to form collaborative mentor relationships. Through the new Scholars Program, undergraduates will develop opportunities to conduct original field research. Lemelson has high hopes for the Scholars Program, noting that "it will allow committed scholars to go much deeper into their research and give them opportunities to really explore their vocation as anthropologists."

Said dean of social sciences Alessandro Duranti, "I consider the



Robert Lemelson (second from right) at a field site in Bali.

Scholars Program to be a model of the high quality collaborative training we can provide in fieldwork-based research." And according to Carole Browner, chair and professor of anthropology, "This is a novel concept that develops vital research skills among both undergraduate and graduate students by fostering close mentor relationships. A portion of the gift funds four graduate fellowships, which will greatly strengthen our ability to attract and retain top graduate students."

The Scholars Program grew from Lemelson's belief that creative, problem-oriented research skills and close mentor relationships are of crucial importance in training active and engaged anthropologists.

"I know from my experience that regular, one-to-one contact was much more powerful than seeing a professor once or twice a semester during office hours," said Lemelson. "It helped build my identity and shaped me as a scholar."

Lemelson's belief in the value of interdisciplinary scholarship has resulted in the creation of innovative programs that have shaped the direction of academic inquiry, as well as the training and experience of graduate students and post-doctoral researchers. In 1999 Lemelson created the Foundation for Psychocultural Research (FPR), which supports research and training in neuroscience and the social sciences.

Since 2002, FPR has funded the FPR-UCLA Culture, Brain and

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Development Program (CBD). This graduate training and research program brings together the disparate disciplines of neuroscience, anthropology, psychology, education, psychiatry, and applied linguistics to explore the complex relationships between the brain, individual behavior, and culture.

The work of CBD students and faculty has spanned a wide range of research—from laboratory-based experiments involving neural imaging to anthropological field research in areas as diverse as Greenland, Burma, and Mexico. Graduate students, through their mentor relationships with senior faculty, integrate and gain competence in these different areas, helping to forge new scientific ground. The emerging disciplines of cultural neuroscience and neuroanthropology were, for example, innovated first by the FPR-UCLA Program, the first of its kind in the nation.

Lemelson believes that scholarship should also be socially and politically engaged. Through his generosity, since 2008 the Indonesian Studies Program (under the auspices of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies) has been able to award graduate fellowships to support research on issues such as gender, environmental resource management, and political change. The program's recent conference, "Legacies of Violence," addressed issues of human rights abuse and mass violence in Indonesia and East Timor, and included a screening of Lemelson's film about the 1965 mass killings in Indonesia, entitled "Forty Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy."

Lemelson has contributed much time in the last decade to teaching in the anthropology and psychology departments at UCLA. He is a popular professor, consistently landing in the top ten on Bruinwalk, a UCLA student-managed "rate-the-professors" website. He is also a committed mentor, inviting some

of his best students to work as interns for his film production company; two of his closely mentored student-interns are now pursuing doctorates in medical anthropology at UC Berkeley.

Lemelson has been conducting research in Indonesia since 1993, and has shot more than 1500 hours of film footage there, resulting in the completion of eight ethnographic films. His recent film series "Afflictions: Culture and Mental Illness in Indonesia" was nominated for the Best Limited Series award by the International Documentary Association in 2010. His written work, published in numerous journals and books, includes the 2007 volume *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical*

*and Cultural Perspectives*, co-edited with McGill University psychiatrist Laurence Kirmayer and neuroscientist Mark Barad of the Semel Institute. This is the first scholarly volume to be edited jointly by a psychiatrist, a neuroscientist, and a cultural anthropologist.

In addition to teaching at UCLA, Lemelson is president of the FPR and serves as a director of the Lemelson Foundation (a family foundation dedicated to improving lives through invention) and an ethnographic film director at Elemental Productions.

For more about the Lemelson Anthropological Scholars Program, visit [www.anthro.ucla.edu/lemelson\\_scholars](http://www.anthro.ucla.edu/lemelson_scholars)



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