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\$25 MILLION GIFT ESTABLISHES NEW CENTER TO ACCELERATE STUDENT CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION AT THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES

CLAREMONT, California (Sept. 10, 2015) -- The presidents of Pomona College, Scripps College, Claremont McKenna College, Harvey Mudd College and Pitzer College (known collectively as the 5Cs) today announced the establishment of the [Rick and Susan Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity](#). The center's purpose is to accelerate the creative development of students and to equip them to work collaboratively to address the future's most ambiguous problems and complex challenges.

A landmark \$25 million gift from Rick Sontag, a 1964 graduate of Harvey Mudd College, and his wife, Susan Sontag, a 1964 graduate of Pomona College, will provide the new center with both operating expenses for its early years and endowment support to ensure its longevity, benefiting all undergraduate students and faculty of The Claremont Colleges.

"The challenges we face today call for audacious thinkers and doers who can work collaboratively and creatively across disciplines," explained Rick Sontag. "The center will encourage students to navigate change, pull together knowledge from a vast range of sources and have meaningful impact on the most difficult problems with no clear solutions."

A focus on undergraduate education and an emphasis on the creative power of collaboration will distinguish the Sontag Center. As part of an exceptional consortium within higher education, the 5Cs are uniquely poised to support the center's goals.

The opening of the new center is the culmination of a yearlong effort involving students, faculty and staff of the 5Cs in exploring new approaches to creative collaboration. Last year, students from every campus had the opportunity to take part in experimental offerings ranging from a tutorial on micro-controllers to pop-up workshops on such subjects as communication through drawing and prototype development. Newly created grants provided faculty with the resources to supplement existing courses with hands-on approaches to collaborative learning and to develop innovative classes that cut across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

"We are bringing to our student body what some in the dance world might take for granted—the opportunity to work together in a blank space to create results beyond expected outcomes and assigned tasks," said Ronnie Brosterman, Scripps College professor of dance.

One of the student participants, Pitzer College's Miller Saltzman '17, noted, "The initiative is exciting because it brings together people who are passionate about thinking in a radically new way. The center we are creating will allow anyone at the 5Cs to accomplish any project they set their mind to and find people to collaborate with and cheer them on."

Initially housed in Seeley G. Mudd Hall on the Pomona College campus, the center is an innovative setting where students from the five liberal arts colleges can work in creative teams, be intellectually daring, mix things up and think with their hands (or feet).

Already nicknamed “The Hive,” for the buzz of creative and collaborative activity it is designed to foster, the center offers students the opportunity to join in everything from drop-in sessions and unstructured brainstorming to one-hour workshops and course-based activities, with a variety of learning options in between. The center will offer space for prototyping and a welcoming environment to experiment and use design thinking to address complex problems.

"We could not be more pleased to see the growth of creativity as both a value and a process throughout The Claremont Colleges with this exciting, collaborative 5C center," said Hiram Chodosh, president of Claremont McKenna College. "Our programs recognize that creativity drives the improvement of our human condition; thus, we need creative leaders in all fields in order to overcome the challenges and seize the opportunities of our day."

Pomona College Associate Physics Professor Dwight Whitaker and Harvey Mudd Engineering Professor Patrick Little have been named co-directors of the center during a national search for a permanent director. The presidents and deans of the five colleges will manage and oversee the initiative.

“We are enthusiastic about developing ways to engage a wide variety of potential participants,” Whitaker said. “Anyone who wants to participate should be able to find a way to easily plug in—the history major should feel as much a part of this as the engineer, artist, entrepreneur and activist.”

The new center adds a significant resource to the five-college community.

“There is no better home for this dynamic resource than The Claremont Colleges. Each of the colleges is very distinctive in its approach to liberal arts education within its own unique culture,” said Maria Klawe, president of Harvey Mudd College. “The opportunity to bring undergraduate students and faculty with very different interests and backgrounds together is the embodiment of the type of creative fusion that generates discovery and solutions.”

ABOUT THE DONORS

Rick and Susan Sontag have spent a lifetime building successful businesses and actively supporting education and medical research. Rick received a B.S. in physics from Harvey Mudd College in 1964, an M.S. in physics from the University of Nevada at Reno and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School. Susan graduated with a degree in government from Pomona College in 1964.

Their giving to The Claremont Colleges includes naming gifts to LEED-awarded residence halls on both the Pomona and Harvey Mudd campuses, as well as significant gifts to expand undergraduate research. Rick also is an emeritus trustee at Harvey Mudd College.

Rick and Susan bought a small aviation component company in the 1980s, Unison Industries, which became a market leader in aviation engine components. After selling Unison, Rick established the Sontag Foundation, which funds biomedical research, and The Spring Bay Companies, a group of investment businesses with activities ranging from venture capital to real estate.

Rick’s uncle, Frederick Sontag, was a much beloved professor at Pomona College where he taught philosophy for over 50 years.

Rick and Susan have three children: Fred, Cindy (Pomona, 1995) and Julie. They first met in middle school and began dating while students at The Claremont Colleges. Today they celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

ABOUT THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES

The five adjoining undergraduate liberal arts colleges (5Cs) in Claremont, California, were inspired by the academic and institutional value of the Oxford-Cambridge model. Pomona College was founded in 1887, followed by Scripps College (1926), Claremont McKenna College (1946), Harvey Mudd College (1955) and Pitzer College (1963). Each academic institution has its own campus, students and faculty, and its own distinctive mission. The institutions offer rigorous curricula, small classes, distinguished professors and personalized instruction in a vibrant residential college community that provides intensive interaction between students and faculty. The approximately 6,000 undergraduate students may choose from more than 2,000 courses offered each year across the colleges. The adjoining campuses are located on more than 500 acres in Claremont, 35 miles east of Los Angeles.

5C PRESIDENTS

Claremont McKenna College – President Hiram Chodosh

Harvey Mudd College – President Maria Klawe

Pitzer College – Interim President Thomas Poon

Pomona College – President David Oxtoby

Scripps College – President Lori Bettison-Varga