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## UCLA Confers First Mani Bhaumik Award to UW Scientist for Insights into Brain's Neuroplasticity

The Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology at UCLA has named University of Wisconsin's Richard Davidson as the first recipient of The Mani Bhaumik Award. The award was established earlier this year to support scientists in the international community who advance the understanding of the brain and the conscious mind in healing through visionary research, books and education. Bhaumik, co-inventor of the laser technology that made LASIK surgery possible, has funded the annual \$10,000 award.

Davidson, Ph.D., the William James and Vilas Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin, will receive his award at 4 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 16, in the Neuroscience Research building on the UCLA campus. His keynote lecture, "Transforming the Emotional Brain," will examine the mechanisms of mind/body interaction that underlie emotion and the regulation of emotion. Davidson's talk will be followed by a question-and-answer session and a reception. The event is free and open to the public; parking on campus is \$8.

Davidson is perhaps best-known for his research on neuroplasticity, the capacity of the brain to change throughout life. His pioneering research using brain scans of Tibetan monks provided tantalizing evidence that emotions like love and compassion are in fact skills that can be learned. Davidson studies the brain mechanisms that underlie emotion and the regulation of emotion in normal individuals and in individuals with various psychiatric disorders. He also studies the relationship between the central circuitry of emotion and peripheral biology in order to probe the mechanisms of mind-brain-body interaction. A fundamental part of his research focuses on individual differences in affective style ? how and why individuals differ dramatically in how they respond to emotional challenges.

Bhaumik's interest in psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) ? the investigation of the interactions between the brain and the immune system ? springs from

the pioneering work of Norman Cousins. Cousins came to UCLA in 1978 as an adjunct professor of medical humanities to harness the energies of top scientists dedicated to the emerging field of PNI. He was particularly interested in the impact of positive emotions and attitudes, such as purpose determination, love, hope, faith, will to live and festivity. His efforts resulted in the creation of the UCLA Program in Psychoneuroimmunology, which now carries his name. He died in 1990.

"Although there is extensive documented scientific evidence of the effect of mind on healing," said Bhaumik, "the general public and some members of various medical communities do not seem to be aware of this vital benefit. This award is intended to be a worldwide recognition of the advancement in PNI and to foster further research in this pioneering field."

Bhaumik earned a Ph.D. in physics from the India Institute of Technology and a Sloan Foundation Fellowship for postdoctoral work at UCLA. His contributions to laser technology earned him election as a fellow to the American Physical Society and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Bhaumik received the Mahatma Gandhi Humanitarian Award from the Indian American Heritage Foundation for his outstanding contributions to science and humanity and for his bestselling book, "Code Name God."

The Cousins Center encompasses an interdisciplinary network of scientists working to advance the understanding of psychoneuroimmunology by linking basic and clinical research programs and by translating findings into clinical practice. Led by Dr. Michael Irwin, the center is affiliated with the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior and the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

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