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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Two public health heroes to receive award from UC Berkeley School of Public Health

Note: Dr. Marcus A. Conant will be available for interviews from 5 to 6 p.m. on March 21 at the Hotel Nikko, 222 Mason Street, San Francisco. Reporters interested in scheduling an interview must R.S.V.P. to Michael Broder (mbroder@berkeley.edu) by 12 p.m. PT on March 21.

SAN FRANCISCO—**Dr. Marcus A. Conant**, a physician who was among the first to identify and treat AIDS, and **Mary Robinson**, former president of Ireland and former UN Commissioner on Human Rights, will each receive a 16th annual Public Health Heroes Award from the University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health on **Wednesday, March 21, 2012**. The awards will be presented at a gala reception and ceremony at the Hotel Nikko San Francisco.

Conant, a dermatologist and HIV/AIDS primary care physician, will receive the Public Health Hero award for his lifetime efforts in preventing and treating HIV/AIDS. **Dr. Donald P. Francis**, executive director at Global Solutions for Infectious Diseases, will present the award to Conant.

Robinson will receive the Public Health Hero award for her advocacy for the rights of all people to personal health and a safe environment in which to live. **Stephen M. Shortell**, dean of the UC Berkeley School of Public Health, will present the award to Robinson.

“Both honorees are passionate in their beliefs and have demonstrated courageous leadership and advocacy,” said Shortell.

The Public Health Heroes honor was established in 1996 by the UC Berkeley School of Public Health to recognize innovative leaders for improving human health locally and worldwide. For information about this year's Public Health Heroes Awards ceremony or to buy tickets, visit <http://www.publichealthheroes.org>

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About Dr. Marcus A. Conant

Dr. Marcus A. Conant is an honored and respected pioneer, lecturer, physician, and outspoken advocate for people with HIV and AIDS. Among the first physicians to identify AIDS in 1981, he helped create one of the largest private AIDS clinics, was a founder of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, and contributed to development of some of today's top HIV medications. In 1989 he created The Conant Foundation, a nonprofit education foundation that provides patients, their caregivers, and the community with educational tools and information regarding diagnosis, treatment, and management of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Dr. Conant and the foundation have contributed to more than two dozen clinical trials involving many of today's leading HIV medications. He continues his strong, passionate and uncompromising demands to give hope to all people with AIDS through state-of-the-art treatment and the assurance they can live with dignity and respect. (See attached background on Dr. Marcus A. Conant.)

About Mary Robinson

Mary Robinson, the first woman president of Ireland, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and founder and president of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, has been a lifelong champion of health as a human right. She has used her influence as a world leader to advocate for maternal health, reproductive choices, immunizations, and the right to food and clean water. As an academic, legislator, and barrister, she sought to use law as an instrument for social change, arguing landmark cases before the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court in Luxembourg as well as in the Irish courts. In 1988 Robinson and her husband founded the Irish Centre for European Law at the Trinity College. Ten years later she was elected chancellor of the University of Dublin. Among her numerous honors is the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama. She is a member of The Elders, former chair of the Council of Women World Leaders, a member of the Club of Madrid, former chair of the GAVI Alliance board and former president of the International Commission of Jurists. She now serves as president of the Mary Robinson Foundation—Climate Justice. (See attached background on Mary Robinson.)

About the Public Health Hero Award

The **Public Health Hero** award was founded to honor pioneers working toward improved health for all and to raise awareness of the field of public health. The 58 previous recipients of UC Berkeley Public Health Hero award have included actor Rob Reiner, who cofounded the I Am Your Child Foundation; Laurie Garrett, Pulitzer-prize-winning author of *The Coming Plague*; and Dr. Paul Farmer, founding director of Partners in Health.

About the University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health

Building on a campus tradition of preeminent interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scholarship, education, and public engagement that challenges conventional thinking, the **UC Berkeley School of Public Health** develops diverse leaders equipped to help solve the health challenges of the 21st century and beyond. The school's mission is to conduct world class, rigorous research; apply knowledge to prevent disease and injury and promote the health of individuals and communities in California, the United States and the world; develop diverse leaders for professional and research careers through undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs; and enhance the knowledge and skills of the public health workforce through continuing education and technical assistance.

Background on Dr. Marcus A. Conant, 2012 UC Berkeley Public Health Hero

AIDS treatment pioneer

Dr. Marcus A. Conant is one of the first physicians to diagnose and treat Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). He identified the first cluster of patients with Kaposi's sarcoma, a now well-recognized symptom of AIDS. Dr. Conant recognized the pattern of AIDS transmission among gay men in San Francisco and initiated some of the first steps to control the growing epidemic. In 1981, he founded a Kaposi's sarcoma clinic, one of the nation's first specialized AIDS practices.

Patient and community educator

While at UCSF, he would meet with patients in the waiting room of his office each week to discuss generic patient issues related to HIV infection, including diagnosis, disease progression, treatment, and research. These meetings became so popular that they were moved to the auditorium at the University of California, and were conducted on a monthly basis for ten years. These were open-invitation meetings for the benefit of the entire community, and the number of people attending these meetings ranged from 250-1500, depending on the news in the press at the time. The Conant Foundation was established in 1993 to support the ever-expanding size and scope of these meetings.

As other community groups began providing comprehensive information to patients, the Conant Foundation shifted its focus. The introduction of Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy and the utilization of multiple international forums for the presentation of disease-management research presented a challenge to patients and caregivers who desired the most up-to-date information on HIV disease management. The Conant Foundation began reviewing international AIDS meetings and reporting back to the community on the international research results and consensus on how the major challenges of HIV disease management should be addressed.

Outspoken advocate for people with HIV and AIDS

In 1999, Dr. Conant was invited to speak to the Nevada legislature and was instrumental in helping that state to develop an AIDS-response plan for indigent patients. That same year, Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco invited Dr. Conant to co-chair the Mayor's Summit on AIDS, which examined the appropriate response to the numerous social and economic problems created in the San Francisco community by the AIDS epidemic.

In 2001, the Foundation worked with Senator John Vasconcellos to initiate the idea that the state of California would buy an AIDS vaccine for all covered patients as soon as a product is approved by the FDA. This initiative was subsequently approved by both the assembly and the senate of the state of California and signed by the governor. This essential legislation created the financial carrot to drive venture capitalists to invest in the development of an AIDS vaccine.

Recognition and awards

Dr. Conant has received numerous awards, including the Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights Annual Award for Outstanding Medical Service (1983), the UCSF Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Public Service (1987), the San Francisco AIDS Foundation Leadership Award, (1991), the Billy Krause Leadership Award from the Harvey Milk Lesbian & Gay Democratic Club (1991), and the Practitioner of the Year Award from the American Academy of Dermatology (1996).



Background on Mary Robinson, 2012 UC Berkeley Public Health Hero

First woman President of Ireland

Mary Robinson was elected Irish President in 1990 and served for seven years as a leader who continued to fight for equality and women's rights throughout her time in office. In 1992 she was the first head of state to visit Somalia following the crisis there. She also brought global media attention to the suffering of Rwandans as the first head of state to visit the country just after the 1994 genocide.

Tackling global health issues

As a world leader, Mrs. Robinson has used her influence to advocate for maternal health, reproductive choices, women's rights, immunizations, and the right to food and clean water. She is a member of The Elders, a group of global leaders brought together in 2007 by Nelson Mandela and chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

- In 2010 she launched Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health, a group of 16 sitting and former heads of state, high-level policymakers and other leaders committed to mobilizing the political will and financial resources necessary to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015.
- In 2010, as chair of the GAVI Alliance board, she helped launch Mother and Child Health Week in Rwanda. The nationwide campaign aimed to empower communities to make informed decisions on health matters with a focus on maternal and child health.
- In September 2011, she and other members of The Elders took to the world stage to draw attention to the issue of child marriage during the United Nations General Assembly. The practice of child marriage annually denies 10 million girls the right to education, health, and security.
- In April 2011 Mrs. Robinson urged international donors to prioritize the basic right to food and health irrespective of political considerations, after traveling to the Korean Peninsula (with President Jimmy Carter and other Elders) and seeing first-hand the extent of North Korea's chronic food crisis.
- In December 2011 she called on pharmaceutical companies to lower the prices charged for cervical cancer vaccines so more girls can be immunized in low income countries.

Human rights champion

As UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002), Mrs. Robinson integrated human rights into the United Nations system and became renowned as an outspoken voice dedicated to investigating and exposing human rights abuses across the world. During her first year as High Commissioner, she traveled to Rwanda, South Africa, Colombia and Cambodia, among other countries. In September 1998, she visited China—the first High Commissioner to do so—and signed an agreement with the government to undertake a wide-ranging technical-cooperation program to improve human rights in that country. Mrs. Robinson also strengthened human rights monitoring in such conflict areas as Kosovo, in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In 2002 Mrs. Robinson founded Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, which aimed to put human rights standards at the heart of global governance and ensure that the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable are addressed on the global stage. "Realizing the Right to Health" was one of the organization's key priorities.

In 2010 she founded the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, a center for thought leadership, education and advocacy on the struggle to secure global justice for those many victims of climate change who are usually forgotten: the poor, the disempowered and the marginalized across the world.

Recognition and awards

Among Mrs. Robinson's numerous international awards is the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2009) awarded by President Obama. The award, America's highest civilian honor, is given to individuals who make an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, or other significant public or private endeavors.