

## A Legacy of Dedication

A renowned UCLA economic historian has endowed a chair through his estate that provides permanent support for his field.

In May of this year, UCLA's Department of Economics lost one of its finest faculty members when Professor Kenneth Sokoloff succumbed to complications from liver cancer. But Sokoloff's dedication to research and teaching at UCLA did not end with his death. A month later, the department received a gift of \$1 million from his estate to establish the Kenneth L. Sokoloff Endowed Chair in Economic History.

One of the world's foremost experts in economic history, Sokoloff joined the UCLA faculty in 1980. He was the department's first economic historian, but he was soon joined by others. Committed to building a distinguished group of economic historians at UCLA, Sokoloff was instrumental in bringing eminent scholars Jean Laurent Rosenthal and Naomi Lamoreaux to the campus.

Sokoloff's research focused on the impact of the patent system on American economic growth, and examined the comparative economic history of Latin America and the United States. In recognition for his groundbreaking work, he was named a Research Associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Sokoloff also served as a visiting faculty member at numerous prestigious institutions, among them Oxford, Caltech, Stanford, and Tel Aviv University.

"Ken was really good at getting things out of data that others thought were too problematic," said Lamoreaux. "I think of that as alchemy—taking base material and turning it into something truly valuable."

Sokoloff was also a devoted teacher. Lamoreaux said, "He conveyed important ideas very well, and he connected with students on a personal level. He was very generous with his time with students." Many former students and colleagues maintained contact with him, and some became good friends.

"Ken didn't have a family of his own," said Lamoreaux, "but he had lots of friends, and friends were his substitute family. Everywhere he went, he was always seeing an old friend."

Sokoloff stressed the interdisciplinary nature of economic history, building bridges to faculty members in other UCLA schools and departments—law, history, political science, sociology—whose work related to economics.


"He was always building this group, helping to get people hired in other departments who had interests related to economic history," Lamoreaux said. These successful collaborations led to the establishment of the UCLA Center for Economic History in 2006.

It was his drive to strengthen the economic history faculty and program at UCLA that led to Sokoloff's decision to create the endowed chair.

"Ken told me," said Lamoreaux, "that he had devoted his career to building economic history at UCLA, and he wanted to make a gift that would preserve that."

The department has gone through some changes in recent years that could potentially have threatened the strength of the economic history program. The departure of Rosenthal from the campus and the death of Sokoloff were major blows. But new faculty have been recruited, and the group remains strong. Now the creation of the Sokoloff Chair will ensure the future of economic history at UCLA.

Lamoreaux explained, "The economic history core has been three people for a long time, and there are still three people. But the Kenneth Sokoloff Endowed Chair will give us a fourth, which is really incredible. Because of the chair, we will be able to attract a very prominent fourth senior faculty member to UCLA."

Gary Hansen, chair of the economics department, said, "Ken Sokoloff was a distinguished economic historian, and his commitment to UCLA and the Department of Economics were as impressive as his scholarly achievements. The chair that he endowed ensures that UCLA's strength and reputation in this important area will survive long after his passing." 

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