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A Statement from Chancellor Henry T. Yang

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This is a most exciting and joyful day of celebration for all of us at UC Santa Barbara, and for our extended community of scholars, alumni, colleagues, and friends around the world. This reminds me of the exciting day when Professor Shuji Nakamura first accepted my invitation to join UC Santa Barbara in 2000.

I am currently in Hawaii in my capacity as the chair of the TMT International Observatory. A few hours from now, we will be holding a ground breaking and blessing ceremony near the summit of Mauna Kea, where UC is partnering with Caltech and other institutions from five nations to construct the Thirty Meter Telescope.

What a thrill it was to receive the early-morning phone call about Professor Shuji Nakamura. We have so many happy and proud colleagues here who join me in sending congratulations, especially UC President Janet Napolitano.

Ever since Shuji's invention of the blue light-emitting diode and energy-efficient white LED, he and our colleagues have been pioneers not only of a new field of research, but of a scientific revolution. Truly we have just begun to explore the full potential of solid-state lighting and energy technologies.

I vividly remember a story told by our UC Santa Barbara Professor Herbert Kroemer, Nobel Laureate in Physics, 2000. He described seeing a bright blue LED for the first time in 1994—and “suddenly,” he said, “the world had changed.” He heard Professor Nakamura giving a lecture in Berlin that same year. Dr. Nakamura was showing images on an LED panel. Dr. Kroemer turned to the colleague next to him and said, “What we are seeing here is the beginning of the end of the light bulb.” He added, “We are not just talking about doing things better, but about doing things we never could before.”

Professor Kroemer was right. The applications and impact of Dr. Nakamura's inventions are far-reaching: from information and communication, to energy and the environment, to health care and life sciences. By making it possible to bring affordable, energy-efficient LED lighting to developing countries, Professor Nakamura has also made a tremendous humanitarian contribution to our world.

Today's recognition is a testament not only to the rich consequences of Professor Nakamura's research, but also to UC Santa Barbara's thriving culture of interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation, in service to our society. It is no coincidence that six of our professors have won Nobel Prizes since 1998.

Congratulations, Shuji – and thank you for making us at UC Santa Barbara feel so proud and inspired every day since you joined us, especially today.