



# OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

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March 1, 2018

### **Dear Members of our Campus Community,**

I am saddened to share with you the news that Professor Emeritus Waldo Tobler passed away on February 20, 2018. He was a greatly admired professor and made fundamental contributions to the fields of cartography and spatial analysis.

Professor Tobler joined our Department of Geography in 1977 and became an emeritus professor in 1994, continuing to be active during his retirement. He also served at UCSB as professor of statistics from 1985 to 1994. Prior to joining our campus, he was professor of geography at the University of Michigan from 1961 until 1977. He attended schools in Seattle and Zurich, and received his Ph.D. at the University of Washington in 1961. A dual American-Swiss citizen, he served in intelligence for the U.S. Army during the Korean War.

Dr. Tobler was an internationally renowned geographer and cartographer. Beginning in the 1960s, he introduced innovative methods based on digital technologies in geographic research that emphasized theory, mathematical modeling, and dynamic visualization. He was the inventor of novel and unusual map projections, among which was the first derivation of the partial differential equations for area cartograms.

He was one of the principal investigators, with Professors David Simonett and Michael Goodchild, in the National Science Foundation-sponsored National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis. His major career research contributions included work on building a high-resolution global demographic information base; development of smooth finite element and categorical pycnophylactic geographic information reallocation models; and the analysis of vector fields and migration patterns in coherent spatial structures. He is also known for formulating the First Law of Geography and for Tobler's Hiking Function. In addition to over 150 scientific publications, he recently contributed to the book *Map Projection Transformation: Principles and Applications*, with co-authors Qihe Yang and John Snyder.

Professor Tobler was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the Royal Geographical Society of Great Britain, the Association of American Geographers (AAG), and the Western Regional Science Association, as well as a charter member of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association, to name just a few of his longstanding associations. He also served as the United States delegate to the International

Geographical Union Commission on Geographical Data Processing and Sensing, and served on many committees of the National Research Council.

Among numerous recognitions, he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Zurich. He was an honorary Fellow of the American Geographical Society (AGS) and a recipient of the ESRI Lifetime Achievement Award, the AIA Pomerance Award, the AAG Microcomputer Specialty Award, the AGS Osborn Maitland Miller Medal, and the Andrew McNally Award.

Recognitions of his contributions to the discipline include a namesake prize, The Waldo Tobler GIScience Prize of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, which is awarded for scientific advancement in the disciplines of Geoinformatics and/or Geographic Information Science. He was also invited to reflect on his life and career for the book *Geographic Voices*; his chapter is titled "Ma Vie: Growing Up in America and Europe."

Professor Tobler will be greatly missed and is fondly remembered by a wide circle of colleagues who are deeply grateful for his inspiring leadership and mentoring. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife, Rachel, and family. Our campus flag will be lowered on March 6, in honor of his life and his many contributions.

Sincerely,

Henry T. Yang  
Chancellor