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Alumna Donna Attallah '61 Gives Chapman \$3M for Teaching Academy

ORANGE, Calif., January 4, 2010 Chapman University has received a \$3 million gift from alumna Donna Ford Attallah, a Long Beach resident who graduated from Chapman in 1961 and for 40 years taught kindergarten and first grade in the Cypress school system in Orange County. The funds will be used to create a new teaching academy within Chapman's College of Educational Studies.

The Donna Ford Attallah Academy for Teaching and Learning will focus on developing future K-12 teachers as well as studying education in the larger social context how teaching must adapt to fit the needs of a changing society, said Don Cardinal, Ph.D., dean of the College of Educational Studies. The academy will exist within the college, Cardinal said, and will include everything we do in teacher education from now on, from our three master's programs in special education, elementary education and secondary education, our numerous teaching credential programs, our community literacy program and more.

The full scope of the academy, according to Cardinal and Attallah, will continue to develop and may include more programs in the future. Some programs will launch this spring semester, but the academy will officially open this fall, they said. A search for an academy director, who will hold the Donna Ford Attallah Professorship (the result of a separate gift from Attallah), may begin this spring.

During a time when education is in crisis and our nation is in ever greater need of qualified and highly trained teachers, we are particularly grateful to receive this most generous gift from our alumna Donna Ford Attallah, said Cardinal. Thanks to her visionary support in creating this academy, we will be able to propel our graduates the future teachers of America to even higher levels of possibility and promise.

Donna Ford graduated from Chapman in 1961 with a degree in education, and went on to teach kindergarten and first grade in the Cypress school system for 40 years. It was as a young teacher in Cypress that she first met Fahmy Attallah, Ph.D., a school psychologist who also had a private practice. She was entranced by the Egyptian-born scholar, poet and Olympic athlete (he was a long-distance swimmer and, in his youth, a member of Egypt's Olympic water polo team). During their second dinner together, he described to her how their wedding would look. I think I might be engaged, she told a friend that night.

Donna and Fahmy were happily married for 43 years, until Fahmy's death in 2005. Due to careful and foresighted investments over the years, the couple was able to give generously to Chapman University on many occasions, including establishing the Donna Ford and Fahmy Attallah, Ph.D. Library of Arts and Humanities, the aforementioned Attallah Professorship in Education and the Attallah Chair in Church Relations. (Despite the fact that Fahmy was a USC alumnus, he developed a very deep affection for his wife's alma mater over the years.)

Donna also honored Fahmy after his passing by donating \$1.5 million to Chapman to build the Fahmy Attallah, Ph.D. Piazza, a graceful plaza centered by a fountain engraved with quotes from Fahmy's poetry. The piazza was dedicated in December 2007 and is now considered the centerpiece of the Chapman campus in Orange.

Donna says, We always felt our education put us where we were we never had children, so we wanted in some way to give back to young people and to support their quest for a fine education. Chapman gave me an excellent foundation to go out into the teaching profession and become very successful. The university has been well known for its excellent teacher programs for many years, so when the opportunity came about for me to support this new teaching academy, I was very happy to do it. She added that (Chapman President) Jim Doti is a huge factor, too his enthusiasm for Chapman is infectious, and he inspires you to give and give again.

Chapman University's College of Educational Studies has a history that stretches back to 1861, when the university, then known as Hesperian College, first began educating teachers. The College of Educational Studies currently offers multiple undergraduate and credential programs; master of arts degrees in teaching (elementary, secondary and special education), school counseling and school psychology; a master of science degree in communication sciences and disorders; and a Ph.D. in education in three areas: disability studies, school psychology and cultural and curricular studies.