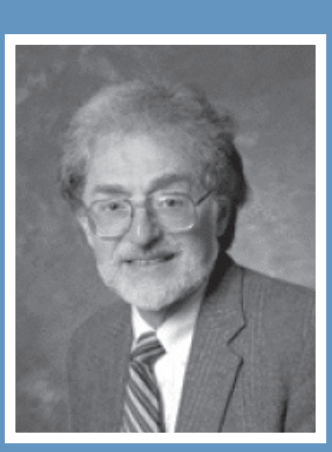
The Eugene D. Commins Chair in Experimental Physics

An opportunity to honor a scholar, a gentleman and an esteemed colleague at Berkeley Physics for more than 55 years



"You have to see what the student needs, have some intuition about what works, and most importantly, you need to pay attention to them. When it comes to my students, I've always been surprised by their brilliance and their ingenuity. They kept surpassing anything I expected... Seeing a student become a scientist in their own right: that's probably given me more satisfaction than anything else."

~Eugene D. Commins

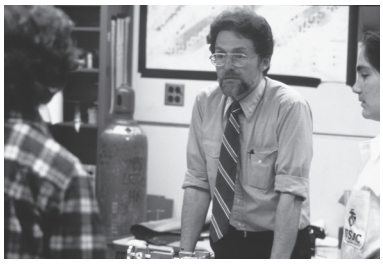
Berkeley Physics is launching a campaign to create a new chair in honor of **Eugene D. Commins**, Professor Emeritus, and a pillar within the department since 1960. Commins passed away on September 26, 2015 at the age of 83.

Steven Chu, Berkeley alum and Nobel Laureate is leading the project as a testament to the worldwide impact Commins had in mentoring graduate students for more than five decades. "Eugene Commins had an uncanny ability to bring out the best in all his students," said Chu. He is a "model of what a scientist and mentor should be."

Commins joined Berkeley Physics in 1960 as an Assistant Professor, after serving as a research physicist at Columbia Radiation Lab. He became Associate Professor in 1965, Professor in 1969 and Professor Emeritus in 2005. Commins also served as chair of the department from 1972-1974.

Although he retired in 2001 he remained active in the department, continuing to teach and informally mentor Physics department students. That same year, colleagues, friends and former students gathered to honor him with the "CominsFest Symposium." The two-day event featured talks on Commins' past and present scientific interests and highlighted his passion for music and art. It featured an array of distinguished speakers, most of whom traced their academic lineage to Commins. The conference proceedings, *Art and Symmetry in Experimental Physics* was published shortly thereafter. In 2014, Commins authored the book, *Quantum Mechanics: an Experimentalist's Approach*. It was an outgrowth of lecture notes he developed while teaching Physics 221AB frequently between 1965 and 2010.

Professor Commins and a group of his students, including future Nobelist and U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, were among the first to observe atomic parity violation, a subtle effect of the fundamental weak interactions. These experiments confirmed the Weinberg-Salam-Glashow model which is at the core of what is now called "The Standard Model" and for which the three theorists were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1979.



A natural educator and loved by his students, Commins was awarded UC Berkeley's Distinguished Teaching award twice, first in 1963 and then again in 1979. He was named a member of the National Academy of Sciences in 1987. In 2001, he was awarded the Berkeley Citation, which is given to individuals whose achievements exceed the standard of excellence in their fields. In 2005, he was the honoree of the Oersted Medal, by the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT). This award, named after Hans Christian Oersted, recognizes those who have had an outstanding, widespread, and lasting impact on the teaching of physics. In 2010, AAPT also awarded him the first J.D. Jackson Excellence in Graduate Education Award, a prestigious accolade given by the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT). Commins is also a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a Fellow with the American Physical Society (APS).

"Eugene Commins was an outstanding professor and a recognized pioneer in the development of high precision experimental methods for measuring minuscule atomic effects of fundamental physical importance," noted Steve Boggs, Berkeley Physics Department Chair. "He spent much of his career searching for the electric dipole moment of the electron – a measurement that has important bearing on the Standard Model of particle physics."

The **Eugene D. Commins Chair in Experimental Physics** will celebrate an exceptional mentor, educator and scientist.

For more information on the Eugene D. Commins Chair in Experimental Physics, contact UC Berkeley Physics, 374 Le Conte Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720, (510) 642-3355. Contributions via check should be mailed to the address above, made payable to UC Berkeley Foundation with 'Eugene Commins/W8158' in the memo line or visit www.give.berkeley.edu/commins to make a gift online.

Per University policy, The Eugene D. Commins Chair in Experimental Physics will be named as a Professorship or Fellowship, if funding requirements for a chair are not met.