

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Media Contact:**

Chaghig Walker  
minassianwalker@yahoo.com  
(510) 882-3726

### GALA PROCEEDS BRING ENDOWMENT

### CAMPAIGN TO \$850,000

San Francisco, CA (MARCH 29, 2008) -- The San Francisco community came together in style to demonstrate their commitment to the U.C. Berkeley Armenian Studies Program at a Benefit Gala held on Saturday, March 29 at The Olympic Club. With an attendance of 200 people, proceeds from the evening and previous fundraising bring the total raised for the William Saroyan Endowment since the beginning of the \$2M Campaign to \$850,000.

“The support of such a wide spectrum from our community shows just how significant Armenian Studies is for all Armenians” states Chaghig Walker, Co-Chair of the Gala. “Because of these donations, our history is being shared, our language kept alive, and we are being represented at symposiums and lectures by well respected scholars such as Professor Stephan Astourian.”

Dr. Stephan Astourian is Executive Director of the Armenian Studies Program at U.C. Berkeley and Adjunct Professor in History. Since the Program’s inception, many courses have been added and the depth and breadth of the coursework, particularly in the Armenian language, has expanded. Funds raised by the \$2M endowment campaign will make the program fully self-sustaining, allow for expanded Armenian language course offerings, enable visiting professors to conduct special courses, and ensure that ASP continue to host public lectures and conferences on contemporary Armenian issues.

“This is an incredibly viable Program and its continuance and expansion is critical for the next generation of Armenians,” says Adam Kablanian,

Chairman of the Endowment Fundraising Committee. “The success of the Gala has helped us make a huge leap in the Campaign and garner further support from our community. We look forward to seeing this continue.”

The Benefit Gala was an evening filled with entertainment, with Mistress of Ceremonies Gasia Mikaelian, KTVU Channel 2 News Anchor. The guest of honor was former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, John Evans, who spoke of “The Fierce Urgency of Armenian Studies.” Ambassador Evans outlined several reasons why Armenian Studies is necessary, citing its significance for Armenians, non-Armenians, and also due to Armenia’s important location in the turbulent Caucasus. Armenians are one ethnic group that has coexisted in the wide variety of cultures that make up the “arc of instability”, including much of the former Ottoman Empire. Mr. Evans pointed out that as a result of this, Armenian studies provides a unique perspective on this critical part of the world for future leaders of the United States, of Armenian and non-Armenian descent.

Following Ambassador Evans’ talk, U.C. Berkeley Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost George Breslauer spoke to the audience about his support for Armenian Studies at Berkeley and gave an informative update about Berkeley’s recent academic and fundraising achievements, presenting compelling reasons for why this University is the best location to build the premier Armenian Studies Program in the world.

### **About the Armenian Studies Program:**

The Armenian Studies Program at the University of California at Berkeley is funded through the generosity of the William Saroyan Endowment and the Krouzian Endowment Fund, and was established initially as a Visiting Professorship in Armenian Studies in 1995. Under the direction of Dr. Stephan Astourian the ASP has since developed into a full-fledged academic program focusing on contemporary Armenian history, language, politics and culture. The ASP is now fully integrated into the Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ISEEES), generally viewed as the best in the nation. The program is further enriched by visiting lectures, academic conferences, symposia, and public speaking engagements.

For more information or to donate to the William Saroyan Endowment, please contact Cynthia Avakian at [cpavakian@yahoo.com](mailto:cpavakian@yahoo.com), or call 415-566-1120.