

ROBERT J. BIRGENEAU

CHANCELLOR

Robert J. Birgeneau became the ninth chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, on September 22, 2004. An internationally distinguished physicist, he is a leader in higher education and is well known for his commitment to diversity and equity in the academic community.

Before coming to Berkeley, Birgeneau served four years as president of the University of Toronto. He previously was Dean of the School of Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he spent 25 years on the faculty. He is a fellow of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the Royal Society of London, the American Philosophical Society and other scholarly societies. He has received many awards for teaching and research and is one of the most cited physicist in the world for his work on the fundamental properties of materials.

In 2006, Birgeneau received a special Founders Award from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences along with President John Hennessy of Stanford University and filmmaker George Lucas. Established in the 225th anniversary year of the Academy, this award honors men, women and institutions that have advanced the ideals and embody the spirit of the Academy founders — a commitment to intellectual inquiry, leadership and active engagement. In 2008, Birgeneau and President Nancy Kantor of Syracuse University received the 2008 Carnegie Corporation Academic Leadership Award as “Champions of Excellence and Equity in Education.”

A Toronto native, Birgeneau received his B.Sc. in mathematics from the University of Toronto in 1963 and his Ph.D. in physics from Yale University in 1966. He served on the faculty of Yale for one year, spent one year at Oxford University, and was a member of the technical staff at Bell Laboratories from 1968 to 1975. He joined the physics faculty at MIT in 1975 and was named Chair of the Physics Department in 1988 and Dean of Science in 1991. He became the 14th president of the University of Toronto on July 1, 2000.

At Berkeley, Birgeneau holds faculty appointments in the Department of Physics and Materials Science and Engineering in addition to serving as Chancellor.

He and his wife, Mary Catherine, have four grown children and eight grandchildren.