On Campus

$10 Million Gift Creates New Center, Professorship for Turkish Studies

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Columbia recently established the Sakıp Sabancı Chair and Center for Turkish Studies with a $10 million gift from the family of the late Turkish businessman.

The goal of the center is to increase knowledge and awareness about Turkey, including its historical significance and importance in modern global affairs. The center will support academic collaboration between scholars from Columbia and Istanbul's Sabancı University, which was founded by Sakıp Sabancı in 1994.

"Our University community feels a very deep connection with Turkey, with its history, and with its importance in the modern world," says President Lee C. Bollinger. "The Sakıp Sabancı Center for Turkish Studies will be a leading center of teaching, scholarship, research, and service in this field, one that will investigate contemporary issues in a global context. We are honored by the partnership of the Sabancı family in this endeavor and deeply appreciative of their exceptional gift."

Sabancı, who died in 2004, was the president of the board of Sabancı Holding, one of the largest family-owned companies in Turkey. The son of a cotton trader and textile-factory owner, he took over the family business in 1967 and with his five brothers built it into a conglomerate with more than thirty thousand employees. "As his family, we share his enthusiasm for our country and strive to do good things for Turkish society," says his daughter, Dilek Sabancı.

More than 140 students from Turkey currently attend Columbia, representing one of the highest populations of Turkish college students in the US. In 2011, Istanbul joined the eight-city network of Columbia Global Centers.

"For historic and geographic reasons, Turkey plays a pivotal role in many global issues," says David Madigan, executive vice president for Arts and Sciences. "I am therefore very grateful that we can build on Columbia's long-standing links with Turkey to propel Columbia to a leading position in Turkish studies."



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