

YORK UNIVERSITY MEDIA RELEASE

Attention: Education/Multicultural/Foreign editors

Toronto's Greek Community Chooses York University as Home for Hellenic Studies; Hellenic Heritage Foundation donates \$1.5 million for endowed Chair in Hellenic Studies

TORONTO, May 17, 1999 – Toronto's Hellenic Heritage Foundation has chosen York University to establish the city's first permanent chair and program in modern Hellenic studies with a \$1.5 million endowment.

"We are delighted and deeply honoured by the confidence and trust the Greek community has placed in York University by this decision," York University Vice-President (Academic Affairs) Michael Stevenson said to approximately 850 people attending a recent Hellenic Heritage Foundation Gala, which raised \$150,000 that night alone. "Central to our mission is a commitment to accessibility to university education and to the mobility made possible by that education," he said.

Stevenson said the new program will enable students, including the more than 1,000 students of Greek heritage enrolling each year at York, to study the Greek language, culture and civilization that is the cradle of western democracy. "The Greeks recognized the fundamental importance of education in the civilizing process: the process of creating citizens who can think and act critically, as opposed to following blindly."

Hellenic Heritage Foundation Chairman Lou Vavaroutsos echoed those comments: "York's leadership and vision to chair a Hellenic Studies Program marries well with the cultural goals of the Hellenic Heritage Foundation and the interdisciplinary model of the university," said Vavaroutsos. "This endowment serves to enrich our intellectual opportunities and re-address the importance of our classical and modern history and its role in a dynamic and multicultural society such as ours," he said.

Stevenson said York is uniquely positioned to offer programming in Hellenic Studies consistent with the interests of the Greek community because of the University's emphasis on internationalization. York already has strong partnerships with the Athens University of Economics and Business and with the University of Thessaloniki.

York will contribute \$500,000 for the new Hellenic Heritage Foundation Chair and will work together with the Greek community to raise a total of \$2 million to complete the endowment. York will also conduct an international search for a leading scholar with specialized expertise in the study of contemporary Greece.

Said Stevenson: "The importance of a knowledge of developments in modern Greece, for students of Greek descent but also for all Canadian students, reflects the strategic importance of modern Greece. That importance is clear in the context of the dramatic and tragic developments in the Balkans, but also in the context of other developments in the periphery of the former Soviet Union and in the Middle East."

The Chair will reside in the Faculty of Arts, and be a component of the interdisciplinary European Studies Program. This latest accomplishment augments York University's already strong curriculum in International and European Studies. In 1997, following an intense competition, The German Academic Exchange Service chose York University and L'Université de Montréal to pioneer its Canadian Centre for German and European Studies.

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