

Scientific Frontier of the 21st Century

VAN ROOYS' \$2 MILLION GIFT ESTABLISHES COMPLEXITY CENTER

Thanks to the generosity and foresight of University regent Jean-Pierre van Rooy and his wife, Marie-Claire, the University of Hartford has established the van Rooy Center for Complexity and Conflict Analysis. Their \$2 million gift, one of the largest in University history, will allow faculty and students to learn about complexity theory and use it to analyze many aspects of the world around them.

Complexity theory applies to phenomena as disparate as voting patterns, global warming, and the patterns formed by large flocks of birds in flight. It is a relatively new field, one that examines how complex systems generate outcomes. Conflict analysis uses complexity theory to generate practical and applicable knowledge to help understand and possibly resolve conflicts between humans or between humans and nature.

"The science of complexity—the study of complex systems and how their parts interact and where the sources of conflict are—is the scientific frontier of the 21st century," explained Jean-Pierre van Rooy. "This is an opportunity to build intellectual excitement, pursue learning across disciplines, and prepare University of Hartford students to be the alphas of a brave new world."

Already, 20-some faculty members from various University schools and colleges have met to find common ground in the shifting and multidisciplinary field of complexity, according to Joseph Voelker, interim provost and a leader in the effort to organize the center. Jane Horvath, associate professor of economics and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, has been named as its founding director.

The center "will bring individuals from very different disciplines—economics, politics and sociology, chemistry, engineering, computer science, mathematics, psychology, business, and others—together to work on intellectual problems, [which will] lower individual college walls," said Voelker.



Marie-Claire and Jean-Pierre van Rooy

He went on to suggest that the van Rooy Center could pursue a number of efforts, including stimulating innovative curriculum design, publishing papers and books on complexity theory, organizing conferences, and establishing a website to allow the exchange of ideas between scientists in the field of complexity theory from around the globe.

"J.P. and Marie-Claire van Rooy understand how important this way of looking at [things] is and want very much for our students to see it as a way to analyze the world," said President Walter Harrison in announcing the gift. "From physics to psychology to business, complexity theory provides new understanding of very difficult subjects. As a result, our students will have a jump on others in the critical thinking needed to succeed."

Jean-Pierre van Rooy is the former president of Carrier Corporation's international division and the former president and chairman of Otis Elevator Company. He is chairman of the Malta House of Care Foundation, which is a free clinic for the uninsured of Hartford. Van Rooy also serves on the board of directors of Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center and of Bristol Hospital. He was president of Special Olympics Europe-Eurasia and served on the board of Special Olympics International. Marie-Claire van Rooy serves on The Hartt School Board of Trustees. In 2000 the van Rooy family established the annual van Rooy Competition for Musical Excellence for Hartt students. The grand prizewinner of the competition for undergraduate instrumental performance majors receives \$10,000; second prize is \$5,000 and third is \$3,000. ■