

Birnbaum receives honorary doctorate from Ben-Gurion University

By Eddy Ball

NIEHS and NTP Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., added one more laurel to her long list May 20 with the award of an honorary doctorate by Ben-Gurion University (BGU) of the Negev in Beer-Sheva, Israel. Each year, the university recognizes a select group of outstanding scholars, artists, and philanthropists, during its annual board of directors meeting.

In her award letter to Birnbaum, BGU President Rivka Carmi, M.D., described the honor. "The criteria we adhere to specify that honorary degrees may be awarded to individuals of real achievement and eminence in their respective fields, individuals who are distinguished by excellence, originality, and the capacity to excite," she wrote.

For Birnbaum, returning to Beer-Sheva brought back memories of her trip there not long after the university was established. "The first time I visited in 1977, it was a dusty, desert outpost," she said. "Now it's truly an oasis - a center of learning in many fields with a strong scientific emphasis."

An environmentally conscious university

Founded in 1969 as the University of the Negev, and renamed for Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, after his death in 1973, BGU is a leading Israeli university with several programs ranked, academically, among the world's top 100. BGU prides itself on advanced research and applications at the forefront of science and technology, with strong interdisciplinary emphasis, a green campus and world-class sustainability program, community involvement, and local development.

Along with its North American-style medical school, BGU is home to national and multidisciplinary research institutes, including the National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev, S. Daniel Abraham International Center for Health and Nutrition, and National Solar Energy Center.

Linked Video

[Watch the BGU 'Negev is Now' video, shown at the 44th meeting of the BGU Board of Governors, where Birnbaum was awarded an honorary doctorate \(01:41\)](#)

The latest of many awards and honors

This year, Birnbaum joined seven other [awardees](#) (http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/Pages/news/hondoc_2014.aspx) in the ceremony on the BGU Marcus Family Campus. The other awardees included Nobel laureate and cancer researcher Linda Buck, Ph.D.; Pulitzer Prize and Israel Prize winning Holocaust historian Saul Friedlander, Ph.D.; Oxford University Vice Chancellor Andrew Hamilton, Ph.D.; acclaimed classical pianist Evgeny Kissin; and philanthropists James Breslauer, Nahum Guzik, and Cheryl Saban, Ph.D.

Also honored during the board meeting was Shimon Peres, president of the State of Israel, who received the Ben-Gurion Leadership Award and presented his last speech as president.

In addition to her honorary degree from BGU, Birnbaum has been honored by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, Collegium Ramazzini, University of Rochester, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Society of Toxicology, National Center for Women, Breast Cancer Fund, American Public Health Association, National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, among others.



Birnbaum, center, received her diploma from Carmi, as BGU Rector Zvi HaCohen, Ph.D., looked on. (Photo courtesy of BGU)



The tone of the board meeting changed dramatically after the pomp and circumstance of awarding diplomas. Birnbaum, right, made new friends with fellow musicians. (Photo courtesy of BGU)

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