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Philosopher Haridas Chaudhuri planted the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in his apartment living room, near Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. In 1968 he had a brainful of ideas and a thimbleful of money. The newborn school - dedicated to interweaving spiritual, intellectual and pragmatic knowing - slowly grew, gaining accreditation as a graduate school, and renown as an especially good Asian wisdom academy.

Last last year, under a blanket of quiet philanthropic diplomacy, Laurance Rockefeller released a funding transfusion of US\$5 million to CIIS. The grant was kept unpublic until February when CIIS threw a dignified bash to announce the grant and the inauguration of its new president, Robert McDermott.

Michael Murphy, of the Esalen Institute, said the grant "probably represents the single largest gift of its kind to a spiritual organization."

The US\$5 million comes from Rockefeller's Fund for the Enhancement of the Human Spirit, and will be parceled to CIIS over the next five years. CIIS intends to use the immediate windfall for increasing their faculty (now at 40) and programs, and upgrading the administrative computer system. Future funds will go towards permanent physical facilities and to seed an endowment fund-raising campaign.

Rockefeller is a long-standing admirer and supporter of CIIS programs.

Robert McDermott, 51, brings a rich background of Asian and world mystic scholarship to his new presidency. He is editor of the journals, The Essential

Aurobindo and The Essential Steiner (20th-century European mystic innovator), interests that ladle up the East-West flavor of CIIS. McDermott spent two summers in India, living at the Aurobindo Ashram. He writes "...we have seen enough multi-layered drama to suggest that as I join my karma to that of the Institute...there would seem to be spiritual forces at work."

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