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## **UC Haiti Initiative Hosts West Coast Tour of “Haiti: Where Did the Money Go?,” Four Screenings With Acclaimed Filmmaker Michelle Mitchell**

San Diego, CA. April 8, 2012. A film screening and Q&A at the University of California, San Diego campus Monday night marks the first of four stops on documentary filmmaker Michelle Mitchell’s California tour for “Haiti: Where Did the Money Go?” After speaking with San Diego students about the film and its implications for Haiti, Ms. Mitchell will go on to speak at UC Los Angeles, UC Santa Barbara, and UC San Francisco within the week.

“Haiti: Where Did the Money Go?” was featured at a U.S. congressional hearing and in several national film festivals, receiving critical acclaim and stirring up lively debate. The documentary presents controversial criticism of foreign aid efforts and funds following the disastrous Haitian earthquake in January of 2010. Nicolas Pascal, co-founder and Steering Committee Chair of the University of California Haiti Initiative (UCHI), received an advance copy of Ms. Mitchell’s documentary earlier this year, and was blown away by the film. He then contacted her and the production company Film@11, and beginning to work together towards this tour of four University of California campuses including free public screening and post-film Q&A sessions.

Mr. Pascal says, “In the weeks following the Haitian earthquake of 2010, the international community pledged hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to a country of less than ten million people. It was a remarkable display of global solidarity. In the subsequent months, and now years, some have been asking the simple question: What happened to all that aid? Where is the money?”

Ms. Mitchell worked with several UCHI Law and Social Justice section directors, including Jared Wigginton of UC Davis and Nicole Lee of UC San Diego, all students themselves, who volunteered their time and energy to conduct bi-weekly conference calls and facilitate this state-wide tour.

When asked about the importance of the tour Mr. Wigginton says, “in my opinion, there is only one thing worse than not helping a country after a humanitarian crisis. That is promising to help them - literally instilling hope where hands and heads hang low - and then failing to follow through competently and thereby stripping that hope away.”

“Haiti: Where Did The Money Go?” brings awareness to the complex issue of gauging the *effectiveness* of international aid in Haiti. The film serves as a reminder

to those committed to effective aid or development work, Mr. Pascal says, “illuminating gaps in the culture of philanthropic giving and challenging us all to rise above our best intentions.”

He adds, “The take-home is actually directed to those of us that commit our resources, in one way or another, to any other. The message is clear: to be critical in giving, take long looks at potential recipients before making them a beneficiary of your best intentions, and, most importantly, to remain critically focused on the source of your giving long after you gave.”

UCHI hopes these film screenings will raise consciousness about the importance of international organizations partnering with local, on-the-ground organizations, a method that this organization strives to follow by forming peer-to-peer collaborations with Universite d'Etat d'Haiti (UEH), the State University of Haiti, to promote higher education and sustainable development.

Mr. Pascal believes, “With patience and the right orientation, such partnerships can help local communities on their way to national change. Ms. Mitchell’s film reminds us all as donors and global citizens to keep our collective eye on the prize of transparency and accountability in giving.”

Nicole Lee, UCSD Law & Social Justice Chair echoes this thought, insisting raising awareness is crucial because, “it is up to us to demand organizations to be more transparent about how donations are dispersed.”

For questions, additional information, supplementary quotes, and more, contact:

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About UCHI:

The University of California Haiti Initiative (UCHI) is a student-led initiative formed in 2010 following the disastrous Haitian earthquake. UCHI features a unique combination of various academic disciplines working across 10 UC campuses in the UC system, with the support of UC faculty and administration, to partner with local Haitian organizations to improve higher education and increase sustainable development.

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