



Find your passion

Nobel Laureate **Mario Capecchi** accepted an invitation to speak to family members, friends, honored guests and graduates of Southern Utah University's class of 2008 during the 109th annual commencement exercises on May 3, 2008, in the Centrum Arena. As the keynote speaker, he will offer greetings to more than 1,300 graduates preparing to embark on the world. This is the first time SUU has hosted a Nobel Laureate as a commencement speaker. Capecchi was awarded the 2007 Nobel Prize in Medicine for his work with gene modifications in mice using embryonic stem cells. His most recent work is focused on discovering the genetic basis for neurological disorders. SUU President **Michael Benson** is honored to welcome Capecchi to SUU's campus, stating, "I know our graduates and all those in attendance will be inspired both by his remarkable life and his notable contributions to science."

A Harvard University graduate with countless professional awards, Capecchi's adult success is a stark contrast to a childhood spent homeless, wandering northern Italy after his mother was deported to a Nazi concentration camp. His has a happy ending though, as his mother found her boy Mario in a southern Italy hospital four and a half years after she was imprisoned. The two moved to America, where they joined his mother's family in a Quaker utopian commune in Pennsylvania. Capecchi spent his teenage years at the George High School and then went to Antioch College for his undergraduate work. The Quaker atmosphere in which he spent the latter portion of his youth instilled in Mario a sense of social responsibility, but after one political science class at Antioch, he decided to switch to science and math, earning a double degree in physics and chemistry. After Antioch, Capecchi spent time



in work-study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and finally settled on studying biophysics at Harvard where he earned his Ph.D. Capecchi then spent six years teaching and doing research at the Harvard School of Medicine before accepting a position at the University of Utah, where he still works today.

Much of Capecchi's professional success stems from his commitment to ingenuity and creativity. According to Capecchi, "If there are a lot of people doing what I'm doing, then my time is better spent on other projects." Capecchi refuses to limit his work to what people already know, and his work oftentimes defies the odds.

A firm believer in the value and impact of higher education, Capecchi credits his undergraduate and graduate studies as "setting the stage" for his professional accomplishments. It is due to his incredible life experiences and scientific pioneering that Capecchi was selected to deliver

SUU's commencement address this year.

Capecchi believes that if you find your passion in life, you will never feel like you have to work. As to his own profession, Capecchi states, "I don't think of it as work. It's a pleasure." As for his advice to students, Capecchi reflects, "These are the most fun times in life. Make good use of this time. Find out what you are passionate about now."

The 2008 Commencement Ceremony will begin at 9 a.m. In SUU's Centrum Arena with the selected keynote and student speakers, awarding of honorary doctorate degrees and other special recognitions. Following which, graduate degrees and certificates will be awarded during individual college convocations. For more information regarding SUU's commencement ceremonies, please visit www.suu.edu/graduation.