PRESS CONTACT: David Manning  
(212) 817-7177 or 7170  
dmanning@gc.cuny.edu

February 2008  
for IMMEDIATE release

First-of-its-Kind Center for Biography Established at CUNY Graduate Center  
with a Gift from the Leon Levy Foundation

The Graduate Center of the City University of New York announces the creation of the Leon Levy Center for Biography, whose mission is to bring fresh voices and innovative approaches to the highly popular genre of biography. Envisioned as a hub for writers, scholars, students and readers of the genre, the Leon Levy Center for Biography will begin scholarly and public programs in the academic year starting September 2008. The Center seeks to build connections between university-affiliated and independent biographers working in print, film, visual arts, and new media and across academic disciplines.

Funded with a generous gift from the Leon Levy Foundation, the Center will be guided by acclaimed biographers and CUNY faculty members Professors Nancy Milford and David Nasaw, Executive Director and Faculty Co-Director of the Leon Levy Center for Biography, respectively.

(more)
Shelby White, founding trustee of the Leon Levy Foundation, said, "My husband and I always had a strong interest in history and biography. We spent many hours discussing with Nancy Milford, a longtime friend, the importance of biography and the way it integrated so many fields of study. I am thrilled, and Leon would have been too, that this groundbreaking Center for Biography has been named in his honor. I am particularly pleased that two such outstanding scholars as Nancy and David Nasaw have been chosen to lead this program."

William P. Kelly, President of the Graduate Center, said, "We are extremely grateful to Shelby White and the Leon Levy Foundation. This is an exciting opportunity to transform the place of biography in both the academy and contemporary culture."

The Center’s mandate includes the promotion of a dialogue about the nature of biography and its legitimacy as a scholarly pursuit. At the center of its programs are resident biography fellowships open to emerging and established biographers with and without academic affiliation. In addition, two dissertation fellows will be chosen from amongst The Graduate Center’s PhD candidates. Biography fellows receive funding, writing space and faculty privileges and will participate in a biweekly Biography seminar. The Leon Levy Center for Biography will also host an annual conference, a lecture by a celebrated biographer, and a series of talks on biography throughout the academic year.

(more)
David Nasaw is Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Professor of History at the Graduate Center where he is Executive Director of the Center for the Humanities. He received the New-York Historical Society American History Book Prize for *Andrew Carnegie* and the Bancroft Prize for *The Chief: Life and Times of William Randolph Hearst*.

Nancy Milford, currently a Distinguished Lecturer in English at Hunter College/CUNY, is the author of *Zelda: A Biography* and *Savage Beauty: The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay*. She has been an Annenberg Fellow, a Fulbright scholar and has held a Guggenheim Fellowship in Biography.

The Graduate Center
The Graduate Center is the doctorate-granting institution of the City University of New York (CUNY). An internationally recognized center for advanced studies and a national model for public doctoral education, the school offers more than thirty doctoral programs, as well as a number of master's programs. Many of its faculty members are among the world's leading scholars in their respective fields, and its alumni hold major positions in industry and government, as well as in academia. The Graduate Center is also home to more than thirty interdisciplinary research centers and institutes focused on areas of compelling social, civic, cultural, and scientific concerns. Located in a landmark Fifth Avenue building, the Graduate Center has become a vital part of New York City's intellectual and cultural life with its extensive array of public lectures, exhibitions, concerts, and theatrical events. Further information on the Graduate Center and its programs can be found at [www.gc.cuny.edu](http://www.gc.cuny.edu)

The Leon Levy Foundation
The Leon Levy Foundation, founded in 2004, is a private, not-for-profit foundation created from the estate of Leon Levy, a legendary investor with a longstanding commitment to philanthropy. The Foundation's overarching goal is to continue the tradition of humanism characteristic of Mr. Levy by supporting scholarship at the highest level, ultimately advancing knowledge and improving the lives of individuals and society at large.

#############################