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HKUST Scientists Made Croucher Senior Research Fellows

Two scientists from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) were honored with the Croucher Senior Research Fellowship Awards for their research excellence.

Dr Tai-Kai Ng, Associate Professor of Physics and Dr Randy Y C Poon, Associate Professor of Biochemistry, were among the five scholars who received this year's Croucher Senior Research Fellowship Awards. They were selected through a highly competitive review process by leading experts in the international scientific community.

Donald Tsang, Chief Secretary for Administration of the HKSAR, presented award certificates to the five winners at a presentation ceremony held by the Croucher Foundation today.

Dr Ng, a condensed matter physicist, is working on strongly correlated electrons to understand the different models of interaction among electrons. His studies will enhance the understanding of how the four forces of nature--strong, weak, electromagnetic and gravitational--can be generated from one fundamental, unified law of physics.

Dr Ng joined HKUST in 1991 as a founding faculty member in the Department of Physics, and was promoted to Associate Professor in 1996. He received a BSc in Physics (first class honors) from the University of Hong Kong in 1981, and a PhD in Physics from Northwestern University, Evanston, in 1987. He was a postdoctoral associate at MIT from 1987-89, and worked at AT&T Bell Labs from 1989-91.

In 1993, he received an Honorable Mention of the Achievement in Asia Award, conferred by the Overseas Chinese Physics Association. In 2000, he was elected a Fellow of the prestigious American Physical Society. He served as the Chairman of the Physical Society of Hong Kong from 1999-2001 and is a member of the Academic Committee of the Institute of Theoretical Physics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. He is also active in promoting popular science to local primary and secondary students.

Dr Poon, a molecular biologist, specializes in the mechanisms of cell cycle control in normal and cancer cells. He studies a family of proteins called cyclin-dependent kinases and several tumor suppressors involved in cell growth. He is investigating how these proteins are regulated in normal cells, and how they are deregulated in cancer cells. The understanding of these processes will provide insights into the development of novel therapeutic approaches to cancer treatment.

Dr Poon received his BA in 1989, and PhD in 1994, both from the University of Cambridge, where he studied under Dr Tim Hunt, 2001 Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine. He took his postdoctoral training under Dr Tony Hunter, FRS, at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in California, before joining HKUST in 1996. He is one of the founding members of the Asia-Pacific International Molecular Biology Network, and a member of HKUST's Biotechnology Research Institute. In 2000, he was awarded the Science Teaching Award by HKUST's School of Science in recognition of his excellence in teaching.



Dr T K Ng (middle) and Dr Randy Poon (first from right) with other Croucher awardees.

The Croucher Senior Research Fellowship scheme was established in 1997 to recognize research achievements made by local scientists. Awardees are released from teaching and administrative duties for a year to concentrate on research.