Press Release

Croucher Foundation presents research awards to three distinguished scholars
(Issued on behalf of the Croucher Foundation)

December 8, 2017

The Croucher Foundation held the presentation ceremony of the Senior Research Fellowships 2018-2019 on December 8, honouring three distinguished scholars from the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) for their excellent scientific research achievements. Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, President of the Academy of Sciences of Hong Kong, was the Guest of Honour at the ceremony.

The awardees of the Croucher Senior Research Fellowships 2018-2019

Dr Giulio Chiribella (HKU)
Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Engineering
The University of Hong Kong

Dr Li Xuechen (HKU)
Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science
The University of Hong Kong

Professor Zhang Mingjie (HKUST)
Kerry Holdings Professor of Science and Chair Professor, Division of Life Science
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Biographies

Dr Giulio Chiribella, Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Engineering, HKU
Dr Giulio Chiribella is a leading expert of quantum information science and of the foundations of quantum mechanics. He investigates how the counterintuitive laws of the quantum world can be turned into working principles for future information technologies. With the Croucher Senior Research Fellowship he will explore a new paradigm of communication, in which multiple transmission lines are combined in a quantum superposition. Taking advantage of this new paradigm, future communication networks may be able to guarantee the transmission of data even in scenarios where no communication is currently possible. This research programme will explore a new interdisciplinary area at the interface between quantum mechanics,
information theory, and space-time physics. (Please click here for Professor Dr Giulio Chiribella's biography)

Dr Li Xuechen, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, HKU
The ever-increasing antimicrobial resistance has become a serious threat to human health globally. The urgent and public need for new antibacterial drugs grows in stark contrast to the slow drug discovery and development process. Dr Li Xuechen's research team has been pioneering globally both in the new Ser/Thr ligation technology they developed and in chemical synthesis of antibiotics analogues for development of new generation antibiotics. The team developed the first chemical synthesis of an antibiotic drug - daptomycin in 2013, and completed the chemical synthesis of teixobactin in 2016, which enabled the search for the next generation daptomycin-based and teixobactin-based antibiotics, against "superbugs" including methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus (VRE). (Please click here for Professor Dr Li Xuechen's biography)

Professor Zhang Mingjie, Kerry Holdings Professor of Science and Chair Professor, Division of Life Science, HKUST
Professor Zhang Mingjie's research in the past 20 years has been focusing on understanding the structure and function of proteins that are critical for brain cell development and communications. Professor Zhang's research findings have broadened the understanding of basic biological areas including neuronal development and signaling, providing important theoretical basis for the pathological mechanism of various nervous system diseases such as stroke, neurological disorders, hereditary deafness and blindness. Professor Zhang will dedicate the reward to the study of the formation mechanism of synapses - the basic unit of neuronal circuits in the brain, which could pave the way for future drug development in curing mental illnesses. (Please click here for Professor Zhang Mingjie's biography)

About Croucher Senior Research Fellowships
The Croucher Senior Research Fellowships scheme was first introduced in 1997. It is awarded to local academics who have excelled in scientific research work as judged by leading international scientists invited to provide confidential reviews of candidates nominated in a competitive exercise. Funds are awarded to the universities of the fellowship recipients, enabling the university to recruit replacement teachers to take over the award winner's duties for the period of the fellowship. This enables the awardees to devote more time and effort to research work.

The value of each award includes a HK$2 million research grant and the cost of a replacement teacher for a twelve-month period, currently stands at a maximum of HK$ 956,040 for the Senior Research Fellowships.

Media enquiries:
The University of Hong Kong
Melanie Wan
Communications and Public Affairs Office
Tel: (852) 2859 2600/ Email: melwkwan@hku.hk
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Anita Lam
Public Affairs Office
Tel: (852) 2358 6313/ Email: anitalam@ust.hk

Johnny Tam
Public Affairs Office
Tel: (852) 2358 8556/ Email: johnnytam@ust.hk

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