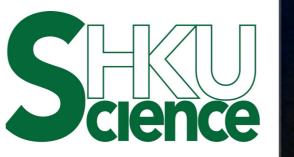


### The University of Hong Kong

School of Biological Sciences



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE



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# **Public Lecture**

## The Continuing Need for Useless Knowledge

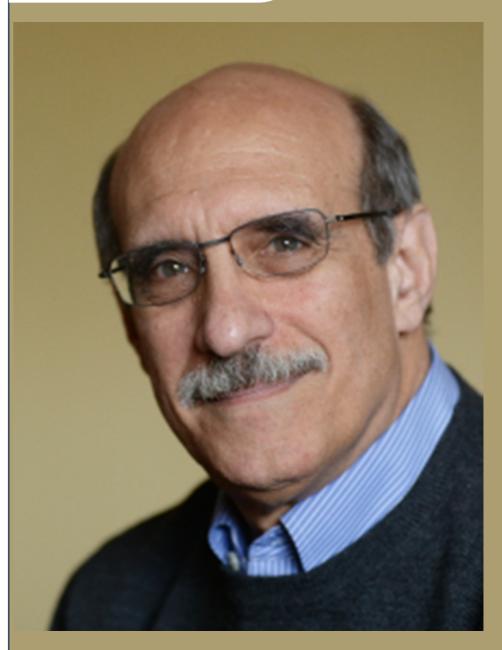
Prof. Martin Chalfie (2008 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry)

## RHT, 10:30-11:30 am, 12 August 2024

#### ABSTRACT

In 1939, the first director of the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study, Abraham Flexner, wrote an article in Harper's Magazine entitled "The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge." In this article, he questioned "whether our conception of what is useful may not have become too narrow to be adequate to the roaming and capricious possibilities of the human spirit," and he argued that real discoveries are made when scientists are allowed to explore the world without recourse to usefulness. Several Nobel prizes have been given for discoveries tangential to what was initially studied. I will argue that "useless knowledge" is needed as much today as in the past to improve human well-being and health. I will also suggest ways that we can encourage the finding of the unexpected, the discoveries that will enable future scientific revolutions.

#### SPEAKER



Professor Martin Chalfie

University Professor, Columbia University

Time:August 12, 2024 (Monday) 10:30-11:30 amVenue:Rayson Huang Theatre (Run Run Shaw Building)Moderator:Prof. Chaogu Zheng (School of Biological Sciences,<br/>Faculty of Sciences, The University of Hong Kong)

Enquiry: cgzheng@hku.hk

**Registration:** https://forms.office.com/r/hzxJBUJStx

Online Registration

He shared the 2008 Nobel Prize in
Chemistry "for the discovery and
development of the green fluorescent
protein, GFP", which revolutionized
biological and biomedical research. He
also pioneered studies into the genetic
basis of neuronal differentiation and
mechanosensation using the model
organism *C. elegans*. He is an elected
member of the National Academy of
Sciences, a foreign member of the
Royal Society, and a recipient of the
E.B. Wilson medal and the Lomonosov
Gold Medal, among other distinctions.