



Press Release

**HKU launches “Rising Stars”
Academic staff global recruitment campaign**

October 22, 2020



From left to right: (1) Professor Juha Merilä, Director of Research for the Division of Ecology and Biodiversity, Faculty of Science; (2) Professor Taku Komura, Professor, Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Engineering; (3) Dr. Karen Grépin, Associate Professor of the Division of Health Economics, Policy and Management, School of Public Health, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine; (4) Professor Lo Hoi Kwong, Director of the Research Division (RDD) of Physics and Astronomy, Faculty of Science

The University of Hong Kong (HKU) launches the Rising Stars recruitment campaign, a new round of global academic staff recruitment to attract top scholars in exciting emerging fields, above and beyond its ongoing recruitment plan. HKU welcomes talents of any discipline, and hopes to recruit new blood for frontier fields with high potential for scientific and scholarly breakthroughs.

"As a leading global university, it is HKU's top priority to recruit the best scholars from around the world and nurture outstanding future leaders regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender and religion. We are committed to engaging top talents, and to attracting young scholars and scientists in the pursuit for excellence." said Professor Xiang Zhang, President and Vice-Chancellor of HKU.

Talent recruitment is a key priority for universities in nurturing talents and invention of knowledge. A "Meeting of Minds@HKU" forum was launched in October last year, gathering aspiring young scholars around the world to take part in intellectually stimulating and creative dialogues on grand challenges--through the lens of advanced knowledge, discovery and innovation across disciplines. From over 690 applications, eight outstanding young scholars were recruited to join HKU. Coming from top universities including MIT, Oxford, Princeton, Stanford, UC Berkeley, and University of Chicago, these young scholars already have impressive academic achievements, with the majority having published as key authors in top-tier international academic journals.

Through HKU's global recruitment over the past two years, our Faculties have recruited a total of 220 professoriate staff. They are outstanding scholars from top universities all over the world including the US, Canada, the UK, Europe and Australia, and young bright scientists in Hong Kong, who have all engaged in cutting-edge research and achieved academic excellence in the international academic arena. Many researchers who have recently joined HKU said that the University offers good academic and research opportunities which attracted them to come to Hong Kong to further develop their career.

Professor Juha Merilä is the new Director of Research for the Division of Ecology and Biodiversity. He is an evolutionary biologist who is interested in genetics, selection and environmental variation, from genes and individuals to populations and species. After being at the University of Helsinki for 20 years, he welcomes the opportunity to work in HKU and gain another perspective to academia in such an exotic and international environment. "The Faculty of Science's ambitious plans and investments to strengthen HKU's standing as a world-leading university appealed to me. My goal is to help HKU and my strong young faculty to live up to this aspiration." Professor Merilä said.

Professor Taku Komura, who just started this summer as a Professor in the Department of Computer Science at HKU, is a world-leading expert in character animation, crowd simulation, 3D modelling, cloth animation, anatomy-based modelling and robotics. He was previously with the Edinburgh Centre for Robotics at the University of Edinburgh. "Hong Kong is a very attractive place. I used to live in Hong Kong and I have always wished to come back. Knowing that HKU is a very strong school with many great researchers and students, I am looking forward to exciting research opportunities with my colleagues here," said Professor Komura.

Dr. Karen Grépin joined HKU as Associate Professor of the Division of Health Economics, Policy and Management in the School of Public Health. She graduated from Harvard University with a Ph.D. in Health Policy (economics) and was the Canada Research Chair in Global Health Policy and Evaluation at Wilfrid Laurier University. "My research focuses on comparative health policies on topics related to why people use health services and how we should finance health systems to make them strong and more resilient, including how to prepare them to face threats such as the current COVID-19 pandemic." She saw the move to HKU as an opportunity to branch out into a new part of the world to learn more about what is happening on this front in the Asia Pacific Region. "My family and I thought living in Hong Kong would be an amazing adventure that would allow us to learn about a new culture and explore a new continent," she added.

Professor Lo Hoi Kwong joined HKU from the University of Toronto, where he was Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Professor of Physics. Born and raised in Hong Kong, he won a Prince Philip Scholarship for undergraduate studies at Cambridge University in 1986. "Now is the time for me to contribute back to Hong Kong," said Professor Lo, the Director of the Research Division (RDD) of Physics and Astronomy at HKU. "I will expand the Division substantially in two new research areas, Quantum Information Science and Optics and Photonics, we will be building up an Institute of Quantum Science as well," he added.

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