

S.-T. Yau Receives National Medal of Science



Shing-Tung Yau

Shing-Tung Yau has received the National Medal of Science, the nation's highest scientific honor. On December 16, 1997, President Clinton presented medals to Yau and eight other laureates in a ceremony at the Old Executive Office Building in Washington, DC.

Established by Congress in 1959, the National Medal of Science is bestowed annually by the president on a select group of individuals "deserving of special recognition by reason of their outstanding contributions to knowledge in the physical, biological, mathematical, or engineering sciences." Congress expanded this definition in 1980 to recognize outstanding work in the social and behavioral sciences. In 1962 President John F. Kennedy awarded the first Medal of Science to the late Theodore Von Karman, president emeritus of aeronautical engineering at the California Institute of Technology. Including the 1997 winners, 353 individuals have been awarded the Medal of Science. In the past five years the National Medal of Science has been awarded to four who work in the mathematical sciences: Richard Karp and Steven Smale (1996), Martin Kruskal (1994), and Alberto Calderón (1992).

Yau was honored "for profound contributions to mathematics that have had a great impact on fields as diverse as topology, algebraic geometry, general relativity and string theory. His work insightfully combines two different mathematical approaches and has resulted in the solution of several long-standing and important problems in mathematics."

Shing-Tung Yau was born on April 4, 1949, in Kwuntung, China. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1971, where his advisor was S. S. Chern, who received the National Medal of Science in 1975. In 1971 Yau went to the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) and the following year became an assistant professor at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. After that came appointments as professor at Stanford University (1974-79), professor at the IAS (1979-84), chair and professor at the University of California, San Diego (1984-87), and professor at Harvard University (1987-present). Currently he is also an adjunct professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Yau held a Visiting Professorship and Sid Richardson Centennial Chair in Mathematics at the University of Texas at Austin in 1986 and was a Fairchild Distinguished Scholar at Caltech in 1990. During 1991-92, he was Wilson T. S. Wang Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and held a Special Chair at the National Tsing Hua University in Hsinchu, Taiwan.

Yau received a Fields Medal at the International Congress of Mathematicians in Warsaw in 1983. His other awards and honors include the AMS Veblen Prize (1981), the Carty Prize of the National Academy of Sciences (1981), a MacArthur Fellowship (1985), and the Crafoord Prize of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (1994) (for an account of Yau's research, see the announcement of the Crafoord Prize, *Notices*, September 1994, page 794). He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the New York Academy of Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is a foreign member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a foreign academician of the Academia Sinica.

—Allyn Jackson