

Pioneering Geneticist Named Recipient of 2009 UCSD/Merck Life Sciences Achievement Award

March 31, 2009

Kim McDonald

A pioneer in the field of genetics will be awarded the 2009 UCSD/Merck Life Sciences Lifetime Achievement Award from the University of California, San Diego.

James F. Crow, an emeritus professor of genetics at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, will receive the prestigious \$25,000 award from UC San Diego's Division of Biological Sciences in recognition of his research achievements, his dedication in furthering his field and his efforts to broaden the public's understanding of the implications of new discoveries in genetics.

Crow is the fourth biologist to have his life's work recognized with a UCSD/Merck Life Sciences Lifetime Achievement Award. Originated in 2003, the award recognizes a scientist for exceptional accomplishment and renown across the span of his or her career. Previous recipients include the late Sir Francis Crick and Sydney Brenner, both of the Salk Institute, and Stephen Harrison of Harvard University.

Crow will be awarded the prize April 3 at a dinner on the UC San Diego campus honoring his lifetime achievements in population genetics and evolutionary biology. The dinner is part of a UCSD symposium that will bring together the world's experts on evolutionary biology for a scientific symposium to commemorate this year's 200th anniversary of the birthday of Charles Darwin. This fourth biennial Dean's Symposium, "Evolutionary Biology: From Molecules to Man," will be held April 3 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on UCSD's main campus.

"Professor Crow's work has provided a much needed bridge between evolutionary thought and the study of population genetics," said Steve Kay, Dean of the Division of Biological Sciences, who will present the award along with Chancellor Marye Anne Fox. "His elegant work has inspired several generations of scientists to understand how natural selection acts upon genes in populations."

"It is an honor to present the 2009 UC San Diego/Merck Life Sciences Lifetime Achievement Award to Professor James Crow, for advancing the science of genetics," said James Schaeffer, executive director, worldwide licensing and external research, Merck & Co., the presenting sponsor of this year's symposium. "His pioneering studies and teachings have, and continue to, inspire thousands of students and young scientists worldwide."

Crow's research, focused mainly in the area of population genetics, has spanned more than 50 years and touched virtually every important subject in the field. He published key papers in the areas of statistical genetics, plant and animal breeding, sex determination, inbreeding, the genetics of pesticide resistance and selfish genetic elements. He developed ingenious ways to estimate inbreeding in human populations by making use of the way in which surnames are "inherited," and became a world expert on the genetic effects of low level ionizing radiation. He contributed to the development of the theory of random drift in small populations and with that helped establish the foundations for what biologists now call molecular evolution. His book on population genetics, written with Motoo Kimura, is a classic and treasured by all students of the field.

Crow received his doctorate from the University of Texas and is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Medicine, the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the World Academy of Art and Science. He is an honorary Fellow of the Japan Academy and a Fellow of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters.

Media Contact: Kim McDonald, 858-534-7572, kmcdonald@ucsd.edu

