

April 25, 2012 | By Debra Kain

UC San Diego Professor Named to the Prestigious Royal Society



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Jack E. Dixon, PhD, Vice President and Chief Scientific Officer of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and professor of pharmacology, cellular and molecular medicine, chemistry and biochemistry at the University of California, San Diego has been named a foreign member of the Royal Society. Dixon is among 44 newly elected fellows and 8 new Foreign Members of the Royal Society, a fellowship of the world's most eminent scientists that is the oldest scientific academy in continuous existence.

Founded in 1660, Royal Society Fellows have included Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Ernest Rutherford, Albert Einstein, Dorothy Hodgkin, Francis Crick, James Watson and Stephen Hawking. Today there are approximately 1,500 Fellows and Foreign Members, including more than 80 Nobel Laureates. Foreign Members to the Royal Society are elected for life through a peer-review process on the basis of excellence in science. There are currently

about 140 Foreign Members.

“Jack E. Dixon is one of the most influential biochemists of his generation. His elegant studies have radically advanced our understanding of cell signaling and the molecular basis of pathogenesis,” said the Royal Society in announcing his election on April 22.

Dixon was instrumental in the analysis of protein tyrosine phosphatases (PTPases.) He also discovered that the bacterium responsible for the plague or “black death,” *Yersinia pestis*, harbors the most active PTPase yet described. This enzyme functions as a lethal weapon when

injected into mammalian cells to block the immune response. This mechanism is now recognized as a widely used strategy for pathogenic bacteria to disarm the host's immune system.

A powerful advocate for scientific research, Dixon is also a member of the National Academy of Sciences and past president of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

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