

Shing-Tung Yau, mathematician at UCSD awarded the Fields Medal

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Shing-Tung Yau, a mathematician at the University of California, San Diego has been named a winner of the Fields Medal, the most prestigious award in mathematics.

The announcement of the award, which is presented every four years, came during a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Congresses of Mathematicians in Warsaw, Poland.

Two other mathematicians, Alain Connes of France and William Thurston of Princeton University, were also awarded the Fields Medal.

Yau, who was born in Kwungtung, China, and earned his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, spends his spring and summer at UCSD and the fall and winter quarters at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

Yau's primary work has been in the theory of nonlinear elliptic partial differential equations, the topology of low-dimensional manifolds, and the analytic geometry of complex manifolds.

In 1981, he was awarded the Veblen Prize, a top honor given by the American Mathematics Society.

During introductory remarks on that occasion, Thurston said:

"We have rarely had the opportunity to witness the spectacle of the work of one mathematician affecting, in a short span of years, the direction of whole areas of research. In the field of geometry, one of the most remarkable instances of such an occurrence during the last decade is given by the contributions of Shing-Tung Yau.

"Few mathematicians can match Yau's achievement in depth, in impact, and in the diversity of methods and applications."

The Fields Medal is named in honor of Professor J. C. Fields, who initiated the trust fund to establish the award. Fields, a former president of the International Congress of Mathematicians who died in 1932, suggested the award be presented for outstanding discoveries in mathematics. The first medals were awarded in 1936.

Upon hearing of the award, UCSD Chancellor Richard C. Atkinson said:

" I am very pleased that Dr. Yau has been awarded the Fields Medal . Dr. Yau is highly respected for his outstanding contributions to the field of mathematics and is admired by his colleagues for his extraordinary productivity. At the age of 32 he is the recipient of the most distinguished honor that can be accorded to a mathematician. I am proud that he is part of our faculty."

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