

Donald R. Helinski elected fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

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UCSD BIOLOGIST ELECTED TO NATIONAL HONORARY SOCIETY

Donald R. Helinski, director of the Center for Molecular Genetics at the University of California, San Diego has been elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Helinski is one of 88 distinguished scholars, scientists, public figures, and artists elected to the national honorary society at its recent annual meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The UCSD molecular geneticist is widely recognized for his research in biological nitrogen fixation in plants. His primary interest is in a bacterium that has the genetic capacity to take atmospheric nitrogen and "fix" it to make it available to certain plants.

Using recombinant DNA techniques, his laboratory is trying to expand this bacterium's nitrogen fixing capabilities and to transfer them to other bacteria. If such efforts are successful, these altered bacteria could be employed as miniature fertilizer factories, reducing the agriculture industry's dependence on expensive chemical fertilizers.

In addition, Helinski was one of the principal founders of the UCSD Center for Molecular Genetics. It was established in 1984 to provide a focal point for the more than 50 laboratories at UCSD engaged in the study and manipulation of genes. Due in large part to Helinski's efforts, UCSD opened a new facility for the center last week to encourage more interaction and collaboration among these laboratories and to strengthen ties with the county's young, thriving biotechnology industry.

Helinski joined the UCSD Department of Biology in 1965 after serving as a post-doctoral fellow at Stanford University and on the faculty at Princeton University. He received his Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio in 1960.

With Helinski's election, UCSD has 52 members in the prestigious honorary Academy.

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