

Freedman wins MacArthur Prize

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Michael H. Freedman, a young professor of mathematics at the University of California, San Diego, has been named winner of a prestigious MacArthur Prize from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation of Chicago.

Freedman's prize, one of 25 announced Monday (Oct. 22) in Chicago by the foundation, is a \$176,000 award spread over five years which he may use for any purpose he wishes.

The tax-free prize is awarded to "a small number of exceptionally talented individuals, who by their previous achievements have given evidence of originality, dedication to creative pursuits, and capacity for self-direction," according to the foundation.

The purpose of the awards is to allow the recipients "to pursue their work in accordance with their own direction and inclination." The foundation hopes that by allowing such freedom it will lead to "discoveries or other significant contributions to society that might otherwise not be made."

Freedman, 33, said the money will allow him to pursue some new research directions.

"I'm still deciding on which threads I'll pick up," he said. "I'm interested in gauge field theories, which were invented in the 1950s to understand particle physics and cosmology. I'm interested in the early universe and how galaxies arose and why clumps of matter appear in one area and not in another."

Freedman also said he might pursue some work at the UCSD School of Medicine in the area of neurobiology focusing on molecular evolution and the structure of the nervous system.

UCSD Chancellor Richard C. Atkinson called the award "a high honor for one of our outstanding young faculty members.

"I am delighted for him and for the Department of Mathematics," Atkinson added. "UCSD is very fortunate to have a scholar of the caliber of Dr. Freedman on its faculty."

The award was the latest in a string of honors which Freedman has accrued during the past few months.

Last April Freedman was named "California Scientist of the Year" by the California Museum of Science and Industry, and the following month he was selected for membership in the National Academy of Sciences, one of the highest honors for any American scientist.

Freedman, who earned his PH.D. in mathematics from Princeton University in 1973, joined the UCSD faculty in 1976 after spending a year at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

His major research interests are in the field of topology and geometry and he is currently studying the global structure of four-dimensional spaces. His work in the field of four-dimensional manifolds could have a profound effect on attempts to understand the universe.

In 1982 he achieved international notoriety by solving the Poincare Conjecture, a mathematical puzzle which had stumped mathematicians for 82 years.

Freedman becomes the third member of the UCSD faculty to win a MacArthur Prize. Ramon Gutierrez, an assistant professor of history won the campus' first one in 1983, and Arnold Mandell, M.D., professor of psychiatry in the UCSD School of Medicine, won one this past February.

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