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The New York Academy of Sciences Announces Winners of the 2009 Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists

**New York-area Researchers Are Honored in the Academy's Third Annual
Awards Competition**

Eight outstanding young scientists representing seven academic and research institutions in the tri-state area have been named winners of the 2009 New York Academy of Sciences Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists. This year's winners, four research faculty and four postdoctoral students, were announced at the Academy's Sixth Annual Science & the City Gala in New York City last night.

The annual Blavatnik Awards, made possible by a generous grant from the Blavatnik Family Foundation, recognize highly innovative, impactful, and interdisciplinary accomplishments in the life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering and provide unrestricted financial prizes to all finalists. Winners are recognized for high-caliber scientific research in astrophysics, chemical biology, environmental sciences, gene therapy, immunology, mathematical physics, neurobiology, and neuroscience.

This year's Blavatnik Award winners were chosen from 12 finalists representing 10 tri-state institutions and an initial pool of 154 applicants. A jury of 63 distinguished scientists conducted two rounds of reviews of each finalist's research achievements to make their selections.

The winners are:

Postdoctoral Fellows: Sreekanth Chalasani, The Rockefeller University; Ofer Feinerman, Sloan-Kettering Institute; Eva Pastalkova, Rutgers University; and Alexander Pechen, Princeton University.

And Faculty: Paul Chirik, Cornell University; Carmala Garziona, University of Rochester; Ben Oppenheimer, American Museum of Natural History; and Shai Shaham, The Rockefeller University.

Four faculty were also finalists in the awards competition. They are: Tamas Horvath, Yale University; Lam Hui, Columbia University; Daniel Sigman,

Princeton University; and Denis Zorin, New York University's The Courant Institute.

“We are extremely pleased to be able once again to recognize the best young scientists that our area’s academic and research institutions have to offer,” Academy President Ellis Rubinstein said in announcing the winners. “We thank the Blavatnik Family Foundation for its generosity and foresight in supporting this important initiative, which has never been more important.”

“Developing a strong and steady pipeline of highly trained scientific talent is essential if we are to successfully address the many challenges that face our society and world,” said Len Blavatnik, Chairman of Access Industries. “I’m pleased that we are able to provide badly needed support and encouragement to our most promising young scientists as they pursue their careers.”

The Blavatnik Awards were created in 2007 to acknowledge the excellence of the most noteworthy young scientists and engineers in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. In addition to performing the highest-quality work, candidates must have been born on or after January 1, 1967. For more information about the finalists and winners, please visit the New York Academy of Sciences website at www.nyas.org/awards/blavatnik, or contact Mr. Marley Bauce, Coordinator, Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists, at mbauce@nyas.org or (212) 298-8624.

The New York Academy of Sciences is an independent, not-for-profit organization committed to advancing science, technology, and society worldwide since 1817. With 24,000 members in 140 countries, NYAS is creating a global community of science for the benefit of humanity. NYAS' core mission is to advance scientific knowledge, positively impact the major global challenges of society with science-based solutions, and increase the number of scientifically informed individuals in society at large.