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Promising researchers honored with second annual New York Academy of Sciences Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists

New award for innovation in industry also presented at NYAS Science & the City Gala, along with honors to supporters of New York leadership in science

Five outstanding faculty and postdoctoral fellows at four New York-area academic institutions have been named winners of the second annual New York Academy of Sciences Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists.

The awards, each carrying an unrestricted cash prize of \$15,000 for the winning postdoctoral fellows and \$25,000 for the winning faculty, were presented at the Academy's 5th annual Science & the City Gala on Nov. 17. The awards are made possible by a generous grant from the Blavatnik Charitable Foundation.

In addition to the Blavatnik Awards, the Academy presented a new award for innovation in industry by young scientists, and honored two outstanding leaders of New York's scientific community during this year's Gala, which raised more than \$1 million for the nation's third-oldest scientific organization.

The Blavatnik Awards recognize the achievements of young scientists and engineers from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut who have contributed significantly to interdisciplinary research in the life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering. This year's faculty winners are **Steven Gubser** and **Laura Landweber**, both of Princeton University, and **Thomas Muir** of the Rockefeller University. The postdoctoral honorees are **Andrew Houck** of Yale University (now an assistant professor at Princeton) and **Andrey Pisarev** of SUNY Downstate Medical Center. More on the winners and their work can be found at www.nyas.org/blavtnikwinners.

The five were chosen from 16 finalists who represent a broad range of scientific disciplines, nine research institutions, and hail from eight countries. Each finalist will receive a cash prize of \$10,000 in the faculty and \$5,000 in the postdoctoral category. Some 100 faculty and 50 postdoctoral fellows, representing 28 institutions, were nominated for the Blavatnik Awards. Finalists and winners were chosen by a distinguished panel of 52 judges representing more than 35 academic, research, and other institutions.

"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, and to thank the Blavatnik Charitable Foundation for its generosity and foresight in supporting this important initiative," said Academy President Ellis Rubinstein. "We often point out that the New York area has the world's richest assembly of scientific and technical expertise, but that maintaining this leadership position depends on our being able to continue to cultivate, encourage, and reward young innovators."

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“Science is crucial to the development of the world and society, but scientists need a lot of support and encouragement,” said Len Blavatnik, chairman of Access Industries. “This is only the second year of our award, but I hope that in a few years it will evolve into what I would call a ‘junior Nobel prize’ award with worldwide recognition and worldwide interest from young scientists to participate. In this way, I think we will make a real impact on the development of science and the impact of science on our society.”

To qualify for the Blavatnik Awards, an individual must have made important contributions to an interdisciplinary field of science that significantly advanced their field of interest; have conducted this research in New York, New Jersey, and/or Connecticut at a public or private institution; have earned an MD, PhD, DDS or DVM degree; and have been born on or after January 1, 1966. More details about the Blavatnik Awards, and a list of finalists and judges, can be found at www.nyas.org/blavatnikawards.

In addition to the Blavatnik Awards, the Academy honored a Nobel Laureate and a top medical center executive for their achievements and support of New York City as a center of scientific excellence. Named as winners of the *New York Academy of Sciences Science & the City Award for Outstanding Accomplishments in New York City* were **Sir Paul Nurse**, Nobel Laureate (Physiology or Medicine, 2001) and President, The Rockefeller University; and **Herbert Pardes**, President and CEO, New York-Presbyterian Hospital. The keynote speaker at the Gala was Mexico City Mayor **Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon**.

The Academy also presented a new honor, the **NYAS Innovation in Industry Awards**, which celebrates the excellence of young scientists and engineers in industry, recognizing their contributions to “high impact” research, development, and innovation. In recognizing the team-oriented culture that is predominant in industrial science, the award has been structured to recognize both individual scientists and research teams.

Winners of the team award were **John Miksza** and **Vince Sullivan** of Becton Dickinson for the development of microneedle and inhalable vaccine delivery technology for influenza and anthrax. The individual award went to **Menelas Pangalos** of Wyeth for the development of novel strategies for creating viable therapeutic agents for neurological disorders. More information about the Innovation in Industry Awards can be found at www.nyas.org/innovation.

About the New York Academy of Sciences

Founded in 1817, the New York Academy of Sciences (NYAS) is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to advancing science, technology, and society worldwide. With about 25,000 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.

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