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Birmingham Professors win prestigious Blavatnik Awards

Two Professors from the University of Birmingham have received prizes in the Second Annual Blavatnik Awards, which recognises young scientists in the United Kingdom.

The awards, announced by the Blavatnik Family Foundation and the New York Academy of Sciences, are the largest unrestricted cash prizes available exclusively to talented young scientists and engineers in the UK under the age of 42.

Winners are selected by a jury of leading scientists and engineers in three categories: Life Sciences, Chemistry, and Physical Sciences and Engineering. One Laureate in each category will receive a prize of US$100,000, while two finalists in every category receive US$30,000 each.

Professor Konstantinos Nikolopoulos, of the School of Physics and Astronomy, is a UK Laureate in Physical Sciences and Engineering. He led a 100-physicist subgroup in ATLAS, a large scientific collaboration at CERN, which made key contributions to the discovery of the Higgs boson, regarded as one of the biggest breakthroughs in fundamental physics this century. It completed the experimental verification of the Standard Model of particle physics, the mathematical theory through which we understand nature at the fundamental level, and resulted in the Nobel Prize in Physics being awarded to the physicists who predicted the Higgs boson decades ago. His work has significantly improved our understanding of the Higgs boson and explored potential new physics beyond the Standard Model.

Professor Nikolopoulos said: "*I am delighted and honoured to be chosen as the 2019 Blavatnik Awards UK Laureate in Physical Sciences & Engineering in recognition of my contributions to the first observation of the Higgs boson and my work on understanding its properties. Our knowledge in this area has progressed substantially, and I look forward to further elucidating the mechanism of mass generation and to exploring potential new physics beyond the Standard Model.*"

Professor Rachel O'Reilly, of the Department of Chemistry, is a Finalist in the Chemistry category. She has pioneered the use of innovative chemical approaches in the fields of DNA nanotechnology, sequence-controlled synthesis of polymers, and precision synthesis to foster the development of novel materials.

Professor O'Reilly said: *"It is an honour to be chosen as the 2019 Blavatnik Awards UK Finalist in Chemistry for my pioneering work developing novel chemical approaches for application in the fields of DNA nanotechnology, polymers and novel materials. I am excited about the next stage of this research, in which I strive to see this work make a real-world difference in healthcare, renewable energy and sustainable chemistry."*

"*Recognising and encouraging the brilliant talent of the UK's best young scientists through the Blavatnik Awards is our honour,"* said **Sir Leonard Blavatnik**, Founder and Chairman of Access Industries, head of the Blavatnik Family Foundation, and member of the President's

Council of the New York Academy of Sciences.*"By supporting young scientists as they embark on their careers, we create a positive impact on the country's future prosperity, accelerating scientific discovery and innovation that mankind can benefit from, and encouraging others to follow their path."*

The 2019 Blavatnik Awards Laureates and Finalists in the UK will be honoured at a gala dinner and ceremony at the prestigious Victoria and Albert Museum in London on 6 March, 2019. The following day the honourees will present their research in a public symposium entitled Cure, Create, Innovate: 9 Young Scientists Transforming Our World to be held at the Science Museum, London on 7 March, 2019.

Full details of UK Laureates and Finalists can be found on the Blavatnik Awards' website.

https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2018/12/birmingham-professors-win-blavatnik-awards-2018.aspx