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HKUST Establishes S S Chern Lecture to Enhance Knowledge

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) has established the Shiing-Shen Chern Lecture, with Professor Chen-Ning Yang, 1957 Nobel Laureate in Physics, to deliver the inaugural lecture on Saturday, 9 November 2002.

Prof Chern, currently visiting HKUST, has been hailed as one of the greatest geometers of the 20th century. In 1944, he stunned the mathematical world with the development of the Chern characteristic classes in fibre spaces, which have made an important impact on all areas of mathematics.

His success has inspired many students to follow his example, including Nobel Laureate Prof Chen-Ning Yang, and Prof Shing-Tung Yau, the first Chinese to receive the prestigious Fields Medal in 1982.

"We hope to attract renowned scientists from around the world to visit HKUST every year and give lectures on the latest developments at the frontiers of research," says Prof Shiu Yuen Cheng, Associate Dean of Science and Head of the Department of Mathematics. Prof Cheng studied under Prof Chern when he was a PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley.



[Hi-res image](#) Prof Shiing-Shen Chern

The 91-year-old Chern was born in Jia Xing, Zhejiang, China in 1911. He graduated from Nankai University, Tianjin, in 1930, and received a master's degree from Tsinghua University, Beijing, in 1934. In 1935, he made the unusual choice to study in Germany, under Wilhelm Blaschke at Hamburg University, and completed his PhD dissertation in less than a year. He went to Princeton University, US, from 1943 to 1945, where he developed the famous Chern characteristic classes, opening up a new era for differential geometry.

Prof Chern held the Chair of Geometry at the University of Chicago from 1949 to 1960, then became a Professor of Mathematics at UC Berkeley until his retirement in 1979.

A recipient of numerous international awards, Prof Chern was presented the National Medal of Science in 1975, the highest honor for a scientist in the US, and Israel's Wolf Prize, in 1983-4. Other distinctions include his election to the US National Academy of Science and the American Academy of Arts and Science, among others.

Prof Chern continues to actively promote mathematics in his retirement. He was the founder of the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute at UC Berkeley and served as its first director from 1981 to 1984. In China, he founded the Nankai Institute for Mathematics at Nankai University in 1985.



The Chern Lecture will be inaugurated by Prof Chen-Ning Yang, who will explore the relationship between physics and differential geometry. In 1957, Prof Yang and Prof Tsung-Dao Lee became the first Chinese scientists to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics, for their groundbreaking work on the non-conservation of parity in weak interactions.



Prof Chen-Ning Yang
presents the inaugural lecture while Prof
Chern (left) listens

The Chern Lecture is supported by the S S Chern Foundation for
Mathematical Study, US.

Prof Chern will attend the inaugural lecture. Details are as follows:

Date: Saturday, 9 November 2002
Time: 2:30 pm
Venue: Citibank Lecture Theater, Chia-Wei Woo Academic
Concourse, HKUST
Speaker: Prof Chen-Ning Yang
Title: Evolution of the Concept of the Vector Potential in the
Description of
Fundamental Interactions

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