

Contact: Tom Hardy
Office: (312) 996-3772
Cell: (312) 543-7476
Email: hardyt@uillinois.edu

(Note to journalists: Publication-quality photographs of Sir Anthony J. Leggett, Carl R. Woese and Paul C. Lauterbur are available at www.uillinois.edu/our/images/.)

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Three tapped to receive Trustees' Distinguished Service Medallion
Leggett, Woese and Lauterbur honored

URBANA, Ill. — The University of Illinois Board of Trustees today voted to present its highest honor, the Trustees' Distinguished Service Medallion, to three U of I faculty scientists from the Urbana-Champaign campus. All three were recognized by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, two of them with Nobel Prizes.

They are Sir Anthony J. Leggett, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Professor and Center for Advanced Study Professor of Physics; Carl R. Woese, Stanley O. Ikenberry Endowed Chair and Center for Advanced Study Professor of Microbiology; and the late Paul C. Lauterbur, Center for Advanced Study Professor of Chemistry, Biophysics and Computational Biology and Bioengineering and Distinguished University Professor of Medical Information Sciences.

The Trustees' Distinguished Service Medallion was created to recognize individuals whose contribution to the growth and development of the University of Illinois, through extraordinary service or benefaction, has been of unusual significance.

Board of Trustees Chairman Niranjan S. Shah said that the three faculty members were richly deserving of the board's highest award.

"These three legendary University of Illinois faculty members have garnered many national and international honors for their research," Shah said. "It is fitting that we add our institutional laurels signifying the University's appreciation and profound respect for three of our great researchers and their monumental scientific advances."

Leggett was awarded the 2003 Nobel Prize with two other scientists for studies in superconductivity and superfluidity that advanced the field of quantum mechanics and the understanding of the behaviors of subatomic structures.

Leggett, who joined the U of I faculty in 1983, is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Russian Academy of Sciences and a Fellow of the Royal Society (United Kingdom) the American Physical Society, the American Institute of Physics and an Honorary Fellow of the

Institute of Physics (U.K.). He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2004 “for services to physics.”

A native of London, Leggett earned his doctorate in physics from Oxford University. He worked at the U of I as a postdoctoral research associate from 1964-5 and again in 1967, before returning to join the U of I faculty in 1983.

Woese (pronounced WOHS), an Urbana-Champaign faculty member since 1964, describes himself as a molecular biologist turned evolutionist. He received the 2003 Crafoord Prize in Biosciences from the Royal Swedish Academy of Science for the 1977 discovery by the research team he led of a third domain of life, now known as the Archaea. This discovery added a new life form to the biological theory that all life on earth belonged to one of two primary lineages: the eukaryotes including animals, plants, fungi and certain unicellular organisms, such as paramecia; and prokaryotes, all remaining microscopic organisms. Among Woese’s research collaborators were fellow U of I microbiologists Ralph S. Wolfe and Gary J. Olsen.

Arachaea (pronounced ARE-kee-uh) are simple microorganisms that tend to exist in extremely hot environments devoid of oxygen, conditions reminiscent of Earth’s early environment. Arachaea are more closely related to humans than to bacteria. Woese and his collaborators spent years elaborating and refining the theory, advancing understanding of evolutionary history and the ecology of the Earth’s biosphere. The Crafoord Prize is presented by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in recognition of accomplishments in scientific fields not covered by the Nobel Prize, which the academy also selects.

Woese won the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Award, known as the “genius award,” in 1984. He was the 12th recipient of the Leeuwenhoek Medal, microbiology’s highest honor given each decade, by the Dutch Royal Academy of Science in 1992 and the National Medal of Science in 2000. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society and a Foreign Associate of the Royal Society (U.K.).

Woese earned his bachelor’s degree in math and physics from Amherst College and a doctorate in biophysics from Yale University.

Lauterbur and a British scientist shared the 2003 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for “seminal discoveries concerning the use of magnetic resonance to visualize different structures.” The pioneering work resulted in the development of magnetic resonance imaging. MRI imaging of organs, joints and tissues has advanced medical diagnosis and saved many lives. MRIs are painless and have minimal side effects.

Lauterbur, who joined the U of I College of Medicine faculty in 1985, received the Albert Lasker Clinical Research Award in 1984, the National Medal of Science in 1987, the National Medal Technology in 1988, the Kyoto Prize from the Inamori Foundation (Japan) and the National Academy of Sciences Award for Chemistry in Service to Society in 2001. Lauterbur was a member of the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

Lauterbur received his bachelor's degree in chemistry from the Case Institute of Technology in Cleveland and his doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh. He died in 2007.

Chancellor Richard Herman said Leggett, Woese and Lauterbur represent the best of the U of I's land-grant public research university traditions.

"Professors Leggett and Woese did ground-breaking scientific research that advanced our fundamental understanding of how the natural world works," Herman said. "The late Professor Lauterbur invented one of the great life-saving medical devices of the 20th century.

"Advancing scientific understanding and improving human health are two things that great public universities do well, nowhere better than at the University of Illinois."

President B. Joseph White said that Leggett, Woese and Lauterbur all were part of his inauguration ceremony in 2005.

"It was an honor to have these three great University of Illinois faculty members at my installation," White said. "It spoke volumes to me about the quality of the institution I was called to lead and the depth of the responsibility for me to do it very well.

"It is highly fitting that the University of Illinois Board of Trustees is bestowing its highest honor on Professors Leggett and Woese and the late Professor Lauterbur so that the whole University of Illinois family can express its pride and gratitude to these exemplary faculty members, researchers, colleagues and teachers."

The Trustees' Distinguished Service Medallions will be presented at a to-be-arranged future date.

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The University of Illinois is a world leader in research and discovery, the largest educational institution in the state with almost 70,000 students, 24,000 faculty and staff, and campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield. The U. of I. awards more than 18,500 undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees annually.