

YALE SCIENCE NEWS

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Yale's Snyder Awarded 2007 Connecticut Medal of Science

New Haven, Conn. — Michael P. Snyder, the Lewis B. Cullman Professor of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology, professor of molecular biophysics and biochemistry and director of the Yale Center for Genomics and Proteomics was awarded the 2007 Connecticut Medal of Science, the state's highest honor for achievement in science.

The award, given by the Board of Governors for Higher Education of Connecticut, was presented May 21 at the annual dinner of the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering.

“While working at the frontiers of science, Dr. Snyder is an integral part of several educational initiatives to attract more young people into science, particularly those from underrepresented groups,” said Frank W. Ridley, chair of the Board of Governors for Higher Education, when presenting the award. “From his cutting-edge lab research to his popular university courses to teaching kindergarten, Dr. Snyder is dedicated to advancing a broader understanding of science and the joy of pursuing curiosity.”

Snyder is best known for his pioneering research in the area of genomics and proteomics. His laboratory laid the groundwork for large-scale characterization of genes and gene interactions, and his ongoing research in the area of functional genomics involves analyzing thousands of genes or proteins at once to discover their interrelationships. This work is the foundation for what many now call “systems biology.”

His early research focused on the way cells select directions to grow and divide, and the mechanism by which these processes operate. This gave insight into how specialized cell types and tissues develop their distinctive shapes and characteristics.

More recently, his laboratory was the first in Connecticut to focus research on human embryonic stem cells. His team discovered a novel signaling pathway that is essential for embryonic stem cell self-renewal. They then used this information to formulate one of the first media for cell growth that is free of any animal components, a step that is important for future use of human embryonic stem cells for therapy.

Snyder, who has been a member of the Yale faculty since 1986, received his Ph.D. from the California Institute of Technology and did postdoctoral work at Stanford University. He is a member of the board of directors of the Genetics Society of America and is the president of the U.S. Human Proteome Organization. He has co-founded three biotechnology companies, two of which are located in Connecticut, and serves on the advisory board of several companies. He is the principal investigator of the largest funded stem cell grant awarded by the State of Connecticut.

The Connecticut Medal of Science and the Connecticut Medal of Technology were first conceived in 1991, when then-Senate majority leader John Larsen introduced a bill to initiate an annual state award “for scholarship achievement in science and technology.” The bill was enacted by the General Assembly, and early in 1993.

Unlike their federal counterparts, the state medals are designed to laud individuals, not teams or entire corporations. Previous medal winners from Yale are Frederic M. Richards, Sterling Professor Emeritus of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry (1995), and Ronald R. Coifman, Professor of Mathematics (1996).

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