

NUS centennial professorships for six top academics

Two of them are NUS dons – the other four are from foreign universities

BY YAP SU-YIN

SIX renowned experts in fields from quantum physics to medical ethics will receive the National University of Singapore's (NUS) centennial professorships today.

Professor Barry Halliwell, a biochemist, materials scientist Subra Suresh, physicist Sir Richard Friend and mathematician Louis Chen Hsiao Yun are recipients of the Tan Chin Tuan Centennial Professorships.

The Chen Su Lan Centennial Professorship in Medical Ethics has been awarded to Professor Alastair Campbell, and the Lee Kong Chian Centennial Professorship to quantum physicist Artur Ekert.

NUS president Shih Choon Fong described the professorships as part of its "global search for eminent scholars", especially for research in areas of "strategic importance to Singapore".

He described those selected as having "distinguished themselves internationally for their expertise and contributions in their fields".

They will receive their appointment scrolls and centennial torches from Professor Shih at NUS' University Cultural Centre.

Prof Chen is director of NUS' Institute for Mathematical Sciences, and Prof Halliwell, the deputy president of research & technology at NUS.

The others are professors from foreign universities, and most have had extensive collaborations with NUS.

Interviewed by e-mail on his appointment, Sir Richard told The Straits Times he was "de-



RECOGNITION: Sir Richard (left) and Prof Chen are among the recipients of the Tan Chin Tuan Centennial Professorships.



lighted" to have been given such a "prestigious title".

His plans include being part of the "excellent research activities" at NUS in the area of nanoscience and nanotechnology, which is the science of manipulating atoms and molecules to create new materials and devices.

He was particularly keen on "the area of carbon-based materials for applications in electronics".

And given his international reputation, he hopes "to develop further the excellent contacts between Cambridge and NUS in research and education".

Prof Chen said he was keen to "get into" the study and treatment of infectious diseases, and "work with a group of researchers from within and outside NUS".

With the six appointments, NUS has just two remaining centennial professorships to fill – the Lee Kong Chian Centennial Professorship in Cardiovascular Research, and the Saw Swee Hock Centennial Professorship in Medical Studies.

The eight NUS Centennial Professorships, each endowed at

\$5 million, are funded through private gifts and matching funds from the Government.

The university announced the professorships as part of its centennial celebrations last year.

Centennial professors will initiate and co-lead education and research programmes, and initiate partnerships and collaborations with industry.

They are also expected to give at least one public lecture during their appointment, to contribute substantially to teaching and to help with leadership and entrepreneurial activities.

The tenure is for three years, with renewal possible.

Visiting professors are expected to spend a minimum of three months annually in residence at NUS.

Prof Shih has high hopes for them.

He said that "working closely with our NUS colleagues", these professors "will enhance NUS' research profile and global standing, strengthen our global linkages, as well as enrich our environment for learning and discovery".

yapsuyin@sph.com.sg