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Four MIT faculty win NIH awards

Elizabeth A. Thomson, News Office
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Four MIT faculty have been honored by the National Institutes of Health for their "exceptionally innovative" research.

Professor Emery Brown is among 12 scientists nationwide to receive 2007 Pioneer Awards, while three other faculty are among 29 winners of New Innovator Awards. Pioneer Awards support scientists at any career stage, while New Innovator Awards are reserved for new investigators.

Brown will receive \$2.5 million over five years. Professors Ed Boyden, Alan Jasanoff, and Mehmet Fatih Yanik will each receive \$1.5 million over five years for winning New Innovator Awards.

"MIT is extremely proud to have Professors Brown, Boyden, Jasanoff, and Yanik honored in this way by the NIH. These awards reflect their strong records of innovation and creativity and confirm, once again, that our faculty are truly among the best," said Provost Rafael Reif.

"Novel ideas and new investigators are essential ingredients for scientific progress, and the creative scientists we recognize with NIH Director's Pioneer Awards and NIH Director's New Innovator Awards are well-positioned to make significant--and potentially transformative--discoveries in a variety of areas," said NIH Director Elias A. Zerhouni.

"The conceptual and technological breakthroughs that are likely to emerge from their highly innovative approaches to major research challenges could speed progress toward important medical advances," he added.

Brown, a professor in the Harvard-MIT Division of Health Sciences and Technology and in the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, is the third member of the MIT faculty to win a Pioneer Award.

According to the NIH, Brown "will develop a systems neuroscience approach to study how anesthetic drugs act in the brain to create the state of general anesthesia."

Boyden, the Benesse Career Development Professor in the Department of Biological Engineering and in the Media Lab, will "invent and study new methods of controlling the neural circuits that malfunction in neurological and psychiatric disorders." Boyden also has an appointment in the McGovern Institute for Brain Research.

Jasanoff, N.C. Rasmussen Assistant Professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering, will "devise genetically controlled, noninvasive methods for measuring brain activity in animals." Jasanoff also has appointments in the Department of Biological Engineering, the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, and the McGovern Institute for Brain Research.

Yanik, assistant professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, will "develop microchip technologies to perform extremely fast studies of gene function in small animals to rapidly identify genetic targets for new drugs." Yanik also has an appointment in the Research Laboratory of Electronics.



Photo / Donna Coveney
Emery Brown



Photo / Donna Coveney
Ed Boyden



Photo / Donna Coveney
Alan Jasanoff

This is the first group of New Innovator Awards and the fourth group of Pioneer Awards. Both programs are part of an NIH Roadmap for Medical Research initiative that tests new approaches to supporting research.



Photo / Donna Coveney

Mehmet Fatih Yanik

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