On Campus

In Brief: Summer 2011

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Smoothing the way

Math professor Richard Hamilton recently won the 2011 Shaw Prize, an international award that comes with $1 million.

Hamilton received the prize for devising the Ricci flow, a geometrical process for smoothing spheres and other complex shapes. He developed the tool in the 1980s; the Russian mathematician Grigory Perelman used it more recently in his proof of the famous Poincaré conjecture, which enables mathematicians to describe objects that exist, theoretically, in spaces with more than three dimensions.

“With his Ricci flow, Hamilton has provided one of the most powerful tools in modern geometry,” stated the Shaw Foundation in a press release.

The Shaw Prize is given annually in three areas: astronomy, life science and medicine, and math. Hamilton shares the 2011 prize with Greek mathematician Demetrios Christodoulou.

Steele returns to Stanford

Claude Steele is stepping down as Columbia’s provost this summer, after two years in the position. Steele, a social psychologist who studies how stereotypes undermine the academic performance of women and minorities, has been named dean of Stanford University’s School of Education. Steele was a professor at Stanford for 18 years before coming to Columbia in 2009.

“Though personally saddened by Claude’s decision to return to Stanford, I completely understand this life choice,” wrote President Lee C. Bollinger in an e-mail announcing Steele’s departure. “Given Claude’s great talents and the importance of

the issues he wants to explore and resolve, this is clearly a benefit to society, while it is equally a loss for us at Columbia."

Bollinger has appointed John Coatsworth, dean of Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, to serve as interim provost. Coatsworth will continue serving as SIPA dean until a new provost is hired.

Better map your district

Law students in Professor Nathaniel Persily's Redistricting and Gerrymandering course recently launched a website with their suggestions for redrawing the congressional districts of every state. Their maps, which can be seen at www.DrawCongress.org, are designed to promote political competition and fair representation. The students created as many districts as possible split evenly between Republicans and Democrats, for instance.

"This is the first time any group has taken on a project of this scope," says Persily, who redrew district lines for Georgia, Maryland, and New York, following the 2000 census.

The project's aim is to provide state officials with legally defensible maps that could save them millions of dollars in consulting and legal fees. Earlier this year, several students traveled to Washington, D.C., to demonstrate their work to dozens of state legislators. Says Persily: "The students were, in effect, teaching the very people who will help determine the new district boundaries."

Seven lucky fellows

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, one of the nation's oldest and most renowned honorary societies, recently welcomed seven Columbia professors. The new fellows are microbiologist Maxwell E. Gottesman, historian Mark A. Mazower, computer scientist Shree K. Nayar, geneticist Rodney J. Rothstein, literary critic Michael Scammell, Shakespeare scholar James S. Shapiro, and mathematician Shou-Wu Zhang. They will be inducted during a ceremony at the academy's headquarters

in Cambridge, Mass., on October 1.

Goldberg and Manley elected to NAS

Michael E. Goldberg, who is the David Mahoney Professor of Brain and Behavior in the Departments of Neuroscience, Neurology, Psychiatry, and Ophthalmology, and James L. Manley, who is the Julian Clarence Levi Professor of Life Sciences, have been named fellows of the National Academy of Sciences. Election to the NAS is considered one of the highest honors a scientist or engineer can receive. A total of 45 Columbia professors are members of the NAS.

Alonso named GSAS dean

Carlos J. Alonso, a scholar of 19th- and 20th-century Latin American intellectual history, was named dean of Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) on June 22. He had held the title of interim dean since September 2010.

Alonso has taught at Columbia since 2005 and is the Morris A. and Alma Schapiro Professor in the Humanities. He is author of the books *The Spanish American Regional Novel: Modernity and Autochthony and The Burden of Modernity: The Rhetoric of Cultural Discourse in Spanish America*.

Columbia wins design, editorial awards

For the fourth year in a row, *Columbia Magazine* has won several national awards for its editorial and design content. The Council for Advancement and Support of Education awarded the magazine, and art director Eson Chan, a gold medal for the design of the Fall 2010 short story "Aguas Calientes" by Lauren Grodstein, with illustrations by Vivienne Flesher, and a silver medal for the design of the Summer 2010 article "Autism, Unmasked," with illustrations by Gérard DuBois. Associate editor Paul Hond won a bronze medal for writing "The Night Hunter," his Spring 2010 profile of tunnel explorer and photographer Steve Duncan '02CC.

John Roman’s artwork that accompanied the Fall 2010 article “Oil + Water,” about the BP oil disaster, won a certificate of merit from the Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles; the same artwork was included in *Communication Arts* magazine’s annual review of the best editorial and advertising illustrations.



Guide to school abbreviations

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