



IAS conference attendees. (From left) Professor Jacob Huang, Professor Li Tatsien, Professor Jean Salençon, Professor Sir John Ball, Professor Serge Haroche, Professor Philippe G. Ciarlet, Mr. Alexandre Giorgini, Professor Jean-Marie Lehn, Professor Way Kuo, Professor Pierre-Louis Lions, Professor Lu Jian, Vice-President (Research and Technology), and Professor Alex Jen Kwan-yue, Provost.



Professor Kuo (right) and Mr. Giorgini.



Professor Jean-Marie Lehn (left) and Professor Philippe G. Ciarlet (right).

Sharing ideas across borders

International lecture series promotes collaboration

The spirit of international collaboration continues to thrive at the City University of Hong Kong (CityU), a fact that was highlighted last month during an important conference honoring the 80th birthday of Professor Philippe G. Ciarlet. During his career, the renowned mathematician has pioneered research into the finite element method, differential geometry, and the theories of elasticity, plates, and shells. Ciarlet joined CityU in 2002, and has been a senior fellow with the **Institute for Advanced Study (IAS)** at CityU since its inception in 2015. He has devoted himself to connecting its students and faculty with some of France's greatest minds.

Over the past 15 years, Ciarlet has organized a lecture series that has welcomed high-ranking members of the French Academy of Sciences to CityU. The series has introduced many notable French scientists to the CityU campus, including Fields Medalists and Nobel laureates. Speakers have included Nobel prize winners Serge Haroche, a physicist whose team was rewarded for its work on quantum systems in 2012, and chemist Jean-Marie Lehn, who in 1987 shared the Nobel Prize in Chemistry as part of a research group working in the field of supramolecular chemistry, pioneering the discovery and application of synthetic cyclic compounds known as cryptands.

Jacob Huang, executive director of IAS and chair professor of materials science at CityU, says that this unique research partnership between France and Hong Kong has helped foster high-level academic discussions between the two scientific communities.

"This dialogue has helped us further improve our international network and collaboration with global talent, which in turn helps to promote the cross-fertilization of ideas and the creation of new knowledge," he explains.

On November 12, IAS held a conference, "Celebrating France-Hong Kong Scientific Cooperation in Honour of Professor G. Ciarlet's 80th Birthday," to highlight Ciarlet's important contributions to the university's research environment and to reaffirm the values of international cooperation and high-level conversation that have come to underpin the work of IAS. The institute opened three years ago to promote innovative research in Hong Kong by world-renowned scholars.

Present were Nobel Prize-winners Haroche and Lehn as well as members of the French Academy of Sciences and Senior Fellows of IAS, including mathematicians Sir John Ball, Tatsien Li, Fields Medalist Pierre-Louis Lions, and physicist Jean Salençon.

Way Kuo, president of CityU, opened the one-day conference with a speech underlining the importance of the university's working relationship with French institutions. Over the years, he said, these partnerships have helped ensure that students and faculty at CityU put scientific excellence at the forefront of their research and teaching, and have kept the university at the heart of the international academic community.

In his follow-up remarks, Alexandre Giorgini, Consul General of France in Hong Kong and Macau, highlighted the importance of the research collaboration for France. He praised Ciarlet as an "*honnête homme*," an 18th-century term for an enlightened man who "wants to understand the basic truths of the functions of the universe." He also commended Ciarlet for being an ambassador by using science as a "unifying language" to help create a common bond between France and Hong Kong.

Following the opening speeches, conference attendees enjoyed a day-long program of carefully curated talks by invited delegates on subjects as wide-ranging as the impact of Italian physicist and astronomer Galileo on modern science; quantum physics; and developments in game theory.

"We were deeply honored that six eminent scholars joined together on the CityU campus to present a series of lectures and disseminate knowledge in their research areas among the scientific community," says Huang. "We hope these kinds of events will further raise the global profile of the science and engineering community at CityU and other academic institutions in Hong Kong and Greater China."

The IAS intends to become a leader in interdisciplinary research that benefits society and to be recognized as both a regional and global intellectual center, adds Huang.



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