

Chorafas Prize

1. The Years of Association with the Academy of Sciences (1992-95)

The Dimitris N. Chorafas Foundation was established in March 1992 in collaboration with the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences, Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences, and Swiss Academy of Natural Sciences.

In its first years of operation, the Foundation awarded two annual prizes, each in an amount of 100'000 Swiss Francs, for outstanding applied research. The focus of the prizes has been on nature, man and his responsibilities. The awards were given in collaboration with the four Swiss Academies of Sciences, in four different scientific fields, without regard to gender, religious beliefs or nationality.

More precisely, the Foundations awards targeted extraordinary scientific achievements in computers and communications technology, knowledge engineering, free-market financial products, risk management, the promotion of understanding between different cultures and societies, the control of population growth the prevention of mental and physical disabilities, the long-term preservation of natural resources, and environmental protection.

This emphasis was chosen in appreciation of the fact that high technology, family planning and the preservation of nature have become key areas of scientific research. At the same time, attention has been paid to the equally important concept that researchers must continually confront the consequences of their work on man and nature.

Efforts to contain environmental damage, conquer hunger and disease and promote understanding between cultures originate at the point where all sciences intersect. Against this background, interdisciplinary research is the key to future developments. Based on such premises, in accord with the four Swiss Academies of Sciences, the Foundation made high scientific and ethical demands for its awards. Not only should work to be awarded be original and of an outstanding quality, but also prize winners must prove that:

1. They are aware of the consequences of their work for man and his environment, and
2. They are ready to assume personal responsibility for what they are doing.

Willingness to accept the moral obligations of being a scientist has been a feature that made the prizes unique. For this reason, as a rule, the prizes were primarily awarded to individuals. The international perspective of these prizes and their multidisciplinary character were the reasons why the Chorafas Foundation worked in partnership with the Conference of the Swiss Scientific Academies.

The Academy of Engineering Sciences, the Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Academy of Medical Sciences and the Academy of Natural Sciences undertook a strict selection process. From 1992 to 1995, the Conference of the four Academies administered the prize competition throughout the world, and run the Foundation's secretariat.

Selection committees nominated by the Swiss Academies of Sciences examined candidates and their work in each prize category. Prize winners were selected by the Board of the Chorafas Foundation based on the proposition made by the Conference of the Swiss Scientific Academies.

2. The Years of Independence (1996-)

Since 1996, the awards of the Chorafas Foundation are granted directly to prize winners selected by partner Universities in Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia. These awards target the best doctorate students chosen by each partner University and confirmed by the Board of the Foundation.

Each award is of USD 4'000, unless the partner University chooses to split the prize between two students. Selection is made among a statistically valid sample of candidates. There have been 20 to 30 prizes per year, the exact number depending on the candidates retained for the prizes by the partner Universities. As of today, there are 26 partner Universities in 15 countries. In alphabetic order:

- City University London, United Kingdom
- Columbia University, USA
- Ecole Normale Supérieure, France
- Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale, Lausanne, Switzerland
- Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands
- George Washington University, United States
- Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
- Hiroshima university, Japan
- Karolinska Institute, Sweden
- London Business School, United Kingdom
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA
- National Technical University, Athens, Greece
- Politecnico di Milano, Italy
- Purdue University, United States
- Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, Switzerland
- Technical University of Berlin, Germany
- Technical University of Budapest, Hungary
- Technical University of Munich, Germany
- Technical University of Vienna, Austria
- Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan
- University of California, Los Angeles, USA
- University of Fribourg, Switzerland
- University of Latvia, Latvia
- University of Ottawa, Canada
- University of Toronto, Canada
- Weizmann Institute of Science, Israel

In continuation of the fields of scientific work to which the Foundation devoted itself in 1992, in 1996 the annual prizes were divided into three groups of equal weight:

- Systems Engineering and Information Technology
- Finance, Risk Management and Rocket Science
- Environmental Protection and Birth Control

For the engineering prize, doctorate students have been typically selected from suitable candidates in computer science, with emphasis on the design of complex systems, imaginative projects in new technology, database mining, sophisticated software for networks, and intelligent software (agents, expert systems).

The birth control prize has been extended to include all aspects of environmental protection. The prize on interactive computational finance covered the design of new financial instruments, internal control and novel solutions to risk management. Engineering and other studies focusing on costing and rigorous evaluation of investments have also been classified under finance.

From 1996 to 2005, the aforementioned fields of study and research have evolved to include research and development activities in many fields:

- More engineering Disciplines
- Research and Application in Physics
- Nanotechnology
- Biological Computing
- Bioengineering
- Information Systems for Medical Science
- Applied Mathematics, including artificial intelligence
- Interactive Computational Finance
- Biological and Environmental Protection