

Press Release

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For more information contact:
Greg D. Kubiak, Chief Operating Officer
202-408-2412 * kubiak@sura.org

SURA Honors University of Georgia Chemist As Distinguished Scientist

Washington, DC – The Southeastern Universities Research Association today announced that Henry F. Schaefer III, Graham Perdue Professor of Chemistry at the University of Georgia, will receive its 2012 SURA Distinguished Scientist Award.

The annual honor goes to a research scientist whose extraordinary work fulfills the SURA mission of “fostering excellence in scientific research.” The award and its \$20,000 honorarium will be presented to Schaefer on March 29, in conjunction with the SURA Board of Trustees meeting being held at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

“Not only is the University of Georgia fortunate to have a scientist of Dr. Schaefer’s caliber on its campus, but the entire region and country benefit from his service as well,” said Charles W. Steger, President of Virginia Tech and Chair of the SURA Council of Presidents. “His impact on chemistry and research has been felt far beyond his lab and classroom, bringing great distinction to himself, his university, and his field of study. It is an honor for SURA to be able to recognize Dr. Schaefer’s years of outstanding achievements.”

In over 30 years of academic service, Schaefer has focused his field of study on the cutting-edge theoretical and computations methods for calculating electronic structure in order to better understand the structure stability and reactivity of molecules. He applies the resulting insights to a broad set of interests ranging from atmospheric and organic chemistry to combustion.

His list of publications number over 1,300, with the vast majority in the field’s highest quality journals. In their letter of nomination of Dr. Schaefer, UGA President Michael F. Adams and Vice President for Research David Lee noted, “Collectively, his publications have been cited more than 50,000 times, making him one of the most high cited chemists (as well as scientists) in the world.” He’s also given plenary lectures at over 240 scientific conferences as well as named/endowed lectures at over 50 universities worldwide.

A native of Michigan, Dr. Schaefer received his bachelor’s degree in chemical physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and doctorate in the same field from Stanford University. He served as a professor of chemistry at the University of California, Berkeley from 1969 to 1987.

In 1987, he was appointed Graham Perdue Professor of Chemistry and Director of the Center for Computational Quantum Chemistry at UGA. Though his career, he has accepted numerous academic appointments including at Berkley, the University of Paris, the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zürich and the Australian National University.

In 2004, 300 scientists from 35 countries gathered in Gyeongju, Korea for a six-day conference, “Theory and Applications of Computational Chemistry: A Celebration of 1000 Papers of Professor Henry F.

Schaefer III.” And in 2010, the University of California at Berkeley honored Professor Schaefer with an international conference titled, “Molecular Quantum Mechanics: From Methylene to DNA and Beyond.”

Among his many awards and honors, Schaefer has been recognized by the American Chemical Society with its Award in Pure Chemistry (1979), the Leo Hendrik Baekeland Award (1983), the Award in Theoretical Chemistry and the annual Ira Remsen Award (2003). He received the Schrödinger Medal (1990), the Centenary Medal of the Royal Society of Chemistry (1992), the prestigious Joseph O. Hirschfelder Prize from the University of Wisconsin (2005), and the Ide P. Trotter Prize of Texas A&M University (2011). The Journal of Physical Chemistry published a special issue in honor of Dr. Schaefer in 2004. And he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2004), the Royal Society of Chemistry in London (2005) and was among the inaugural class of Fellows of the American Chemical Society (2009).

In their nomination letter of nominee, Adams and Lee added, “Fritz is always quick to credit a steady stream of brilliant trainees and colleagues over the past 30 years.” As Preceptor and mentor, he’s had 58 undergraduate research publish papers with him, 97 successful Ph.D. students as well as 48 postdoctoral fellows.

The SURA Distinguished Scientist Award was established in 2007, commemorating the organization’s 25th Anniversary. Dr. Susan Wessler, another UGA professor at the time, received that inaugural award. SURA’s Development & Relations Committee manages the solicitation, screening and selection of the recipient from a SURA member institution. The president of each of SURA’s 62 member research universities is eligible to make one nomination for the Distinguished Scientist Award.

The award and honorarium will be presented to Dr. Schaefer at a reception in Tampa on March 29, with a brief address to the SURA Board of Trustees the next morning.

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The Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) is a consortium of over 60 leading research institutions in the southern United States and the District of Columbia established in 1980 as a non-stock, nonprofit corporation. SURA serves as an entity through which colleges, universities, and other organizations may cooperate with one another, and with government and industry in acquiring, developing, and using laboratories and other research facilities and in furthering knowledge and the application of that knowledge in the physical, biological, and other natural sciences and engineering. For more information, visit www.sura.org.