

ANNOUNCEMENT

COLLEGIUM OF POLISH SCIENTISTS

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Hundreds of eminent scholars of Polish origin and ancestry reside in the United States. These scholars have excelled and achieved high recognition in diverse branches of science. While many are known for their outstanding work within the confines of their particular field of specialty, little is known of achievements by scientists working in other disciplines or by the general public in the United States or in Poland.

In 2012 the Kosciuszko Foundation (KF) established the Kosciuszko Foundation Collegium of Eminent Scientists. The goals for this initiative are (1) to identify, record, and catalogue eminent Polish scientists and scientists of Polish descent residing in the United States who have made significant contributions in their respective scientific fields and (2) to recognize, highlight, and publicize their achievements. Currently the selection of the Collegium members is limited to scientists specializing in the natural sciences (broadly defined).

The criteria for election of Collegium members are as follows: (1) Professorship and tenured position(s) at their respective universities or colleges or leadership position(s) and a record of significant achievement at research-oriented national or private institutions, (2) a significant number (50 or more depending on the discipline) of scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals, (3) a significant number of citations of authored publications, (4) a significant number (over 10) of U.S. patents, and (5) an advanced scientific career, combined with active participation in Polish-American scientific institutions, for example, the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (PIASA), the KF, or engineering or medical professional societies. An additional category of Honorary Collegium Membership is offered for American scientists who are not of Polish ancestry but, through their collaborations

with Polish scientists, have made significant contributions to the development of science in Poland.

The names of Collegium members and their scientific profiles together with an outline of the Collegium program and the criteria for acceptance to the Collegium are presented in greater detail on the KF website and on the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) website (www.portalwiedzy.pan.pl/index.php/2014-09-19-08-13-57/).

The number of Collegium members has now reached 308 and is expected to increase. Nominations of new candidates are submitted by the current members of the Collegium and by the members of PAN and the Polish Academy of Learning (PAU, Kraków). We welcome further nominations, which should include a description of the candidate's scientific achievements. Please send them to jsm@thekf.org. All nominations will be reviewed by the KF Collegium Committee, whose members are Zbigniew Darzynkiewicz (chair), Ronald Hagadus (vice-chair), Ewa Radwańska, Piotr Chomczyński, Waldemar Priebe, and Hanna Chroboczek Kelker.

The establishment of the Collegium has been enthusiastically supported and promoted by the KF. During his tenure as KF president, Alex Storozynski committed the Foundation to establishing the Collegium. The current KF president, Dr. John Micgiel, and the Foundation's Board of Trustees have enthusiastically supported the formation of the Collegium. Professor Frank Wilczek of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, recipient of the 2004 Nobel Prize in physics, has added his prestige by accepting an invitation to serve as an honorary member of the Collegium's Board of Advisors. Professor Wilczek, coincidentally, was a special guest at the Kosciuszko Foundation's 77th Annual Dinner and Ball in 2012 when the official announcement of the formation of the Collegium was made. Other notable honorary members are Professors Roald Hoffmann (Cornell University), recipient of the 1981 Nobel Prize in chemistry; Waclaw Szybalski (McArdle Institute for Cancer Research); and Maria Siemionow (Cleveland Clinic).

The Collegium's directory of scientists is an important document that will be extremely useful for promoting contacts between scientists in Poland and the United States. This directory is available to PAN and PAU and other scientific organizations and institutes in Poland and the United States, where it will be helpful in selecting speakers for scientific meetings, seminars, webinars, consultations, and other research and teaching collaborations and interactions.

The names of distinguished scientists on the Collegium's list include four Nobel Prize winners: Andrew Schally (physiology or medicine, 1977), Roald Hoffmann (chemistry, 1981), Frank Wilczek (physics, 2004), and Jack Szostak (physiology or medicine, 2009). Several winners of the Alfred Jurzykowski Foundation Prize (the "Polish Nobel") add to the Collegium's prestige. They include Waclaw Szybalski, a pioneer in molecular biology; Jacek Hawiger, molecular physiologist; Karl Maramorosch, virologist; Aleksander Wolszczan, astronomer; and the mathematicians Andrzej Ehrenfeund, Tadeusz Iwaniec, Henryk Iwaniec, Krystyna Kuperberg, and Jan Mycielski. Chemists are well represented by Krzysztof Matyjaszewski, creator of a new branch of polymer chemistry and the recipient of numerous international

prizes and awards, and the distinguished chemists Krzysztof Pankiewicz and Waldemar Priebe. The physicist Józef J. Zwiśłocki is a member of the National Academy of Sciences (United States). Numerous Collegium members are foreign members of PAN or PAU.

Most Collegium members, 48 percent, work in the fields of biology and medicine (defined as including molecular biology, genetics, biochemistry, immunology, and basic and clinical medicine). Engineering comprise 14 percent, informatics 14 percent, mathematics 8 percent, physics 7 percent, and chemistry 2 percent. Among the Collegium members are astronauts, astrophysicists, seismologists, plant biologists, food scientists, an astronomer, an oceanographer, and an ecologist.

A majority of Collegium members are affiliated with universities or scientific research institutes, and only 5 percent with private institutions, among them, Dr. Piotr Chomczyński, founder and president of Molecular Research Center; Steve Wozniak, a cofounder of Apple Computer; Anne Wojcicki, cofounder and chief executive officer (CEO) of “23andMe,” a firm specializing in DNA analysis of personal genomes; and Susan Wojcicki, CEO of YouTube.

Many Collegium members collaborate with Polish scientific institutions, host Polish scientists in their laboratories and support Polish-American organizations, such as the KF and PIASA, and work for the benefit of Polish science and Polish communities. The creation of the Collegium has been enthusiastically received by the Polish-American scientific community.

The KF (founded in 1925) is ideally suited to carrying out the Collegium’s initiative. Its creator and first director, Stephen Paul Mizwa (Stefan Mierzwa), wanted to create a “living monument” to Tadeusz Kościuszko and to strengthen the link between Poland and the United States, the countries that Kościuszko so nobly served. The Foundation has ably met this goal by providing scholarship and exchange programs for students, professors, and scientists from Poland and the United States and by promoting Polish culture in the United States. The first scholarship fund was created by Dr. Mizwa in 1926 with \$43,375, and the KF began its mission by funding scholarships for Poles to study in the United States and for Americans to study in Poland. The scholarship fund received a significant boost in 1927, when Marie Skłodowska Curie gave her consent to Dr. Mizwa for the creation of a scholarship in her name. Since that time, the Foundation has continued the scholarship program and supports the arts on a scale that would have exceeded the expectations of its founder. The fund distributed \$944,800 for scholarships in 2014/2015, of which \$322,520 (30 percent) was awarded to students and professional scientists. Fourteen scholarships were awarded to Polish scientists and 34 to American scientists. In addition to scholarships, the Foundation awarded \$150,000 for special projects proposed by various artists and musicians and for organizing the Chopin piano competition and the Sembrich voice competition.

The Foundation’s scholarship program has a personal dimension for Hanna Chroboczek Kelker, whose father, Emil Chroboczek, received a scholarship in 1932 that enabled him to complete his doctoral studies at Cornell University. He returned

to Poland and had a distinguished career as a professor at the Szkoła Główna Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego (SGGW) in Warsaw and director of the Institute of Vegetable Crops.

The KF has celebrated significant contributions by Polish scientists in grand style. In 1943, on the four-hundredth anniversary of the death of Nicolas Copernicus, Dr. Mizwa marked the occasion by organizing a series of lectures and a gala event at the Carnegie Hall with Albert Einstein as a guest of honor. The event included an homage to the memory of the great Polish astronomer. In 1973, to celebrate the five-hundredth anniversary of Copernicus's birth, the Foundation's president, Dr. Eugene Kusielewicz, commissioned a "Copernican Symphony" from Poland's distinguished composer Henryk Mikołaj Górecki.

The establishment of the Collegium in 2012 is also a tribute to Marie Skłodowska Curie and honors the hundredth anniversary of her receiving the Nobel Prize in chemistry. By creating the Collegium of Eminent Scientists, the Kosciuszko Foundation continues its tradition of supporting the great achievements of Polish scientists, who are a source of pride for all Polish people.

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