New Cornerstone Investigator Program

For researchers at The University of Hong Kong
June 21, 2024
New Cornerstone Science Foundation

China’s largest non-governmental and non-profit funding organization focusing on scientific research

Scientific Community

• Exceptional scientists
• Stable long-term support
• Discovery research

• Promising young scientists
• Unleashing their full potential
• Advancing the cutting edge
• Basic science and frontier technology

• Organizing scientific forums and symposia
• Fostering interdisciplinary collaborations

Guided by scientists
# New Cornerstone Investigator Program

**Established in 2022**

- Eligible applicants:
  - Well-established outstanding scientists
  - Under 55 years of age

**Field coverage (basic sciences):**

- Mathematics and Physical Sciences
- Biological and Biomedical Sciences

**Program objectives:**

- Support **200-300** exceptional scientists over **10 years** with **10 billion RMB** (1.4 billion USD)
- Provide stable and long-term support for discovery research

**What Investigators will receive:**

- **Funding:** 15 million or 25 million RMB (2.1 or 3.5 million USD) over 5 years (potential to renew for a 2nd five-year round of funding)
- **Freedom:** Fully curiosity-driven, no KPIs, no timeline for deliverables, no strings attached

**Selection:**

- Merit-based and vigorous selection process
- International panel of highly-qualified peer reviewers
Xplorer Prize

Established in 2018

Eligible applicants:
- Early/mid-career scientists, engineers & doctors
- Men under 45; Women under 48

Field coverage (basic sciences & frontier technologies):

Program objectives:
- Select up to 50 awardees per year
- Support promising young candidates to unleash their full potential and push the frontiers of scientific research

What awardees will receive:
- **Funding:** 3 million RMB (420K USD) over 5 years in no-strings attached funding
- **Freedom:** to spend the cash as they wish

Selection:
- Merit-based review by highly esteemed and competent peer reviewers
Quick Glance at New Cornerstone Investigators & Xplorer Prize Awardees

- 104 Investigators have been selected
- The highest caliber of Chinese scientists in their fields

- 248 outstanding young scientists, engineers and doctors have been awarded
- All leading the way in basic science or frontier technology

**Average Age**
- Investigators: 47
- Awardees: 41

**Youngest**
- Investigators: 38
- Awardees: 30

**Physician Scientists**
- Investigators: 4 (4% of total)
- Awardees: 26 (10% of total)

**Female Investigators**
- 11 (10% of total)

**Investigators’ Fields of Research**
- Mathematics & Physical Sciences: 51 persons (33% of total)
- Chemistry: 17 persons
- Physics: 22 persons
- Mathematics and Theoretical Computer Science: 12 persons
- Biological & Biomedical Sciences: 53 persons (34% of total)
- Biology: 35 persons
- Biomedical Science: 18 persons

**Awardee Institutions**
- College/University: 189 persons (76% of total)
- Research Institute: 47 persons
- Hospital: 5 persons
- Industry: 7 persons
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Prize Year</th>
<th>Cornerstone Investigator Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xuhua HE</td>
<td>Chair Professor of Mathematics</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mingxin HUANG</td>
<td>Chair Professor of Materials Technology</td>
<td>2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wang YAO</td>
<td>Chair Professor of Physics</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shuang ZHANG</td>
<td>Chair Professor of Physics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Ryan MICHALSKI</td>
<td>Professor of Earth Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xi DAI</td>
<td>Chair Professor of Physics</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry He YAN</td>
<td>Chair Professor of Chemistry</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhiyong FAN</td>
<td>Chair Professor of Electronic and Computer Engineering</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Prize/Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Renbao LIU 刘仁保</strong></td>
<td>Professor of Physics</td>
<td>The Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>New Cornerstone Investigator 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yi-Chun LU 卢怡君</strong></td>
<td>Professor of Mechanical and Automation Engineering</td>
<td>The Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>Xplorer Prize 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Siew Chien NG 黄秀娟</strong></td>
<td>Professor of Medicine</td>
<td>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University</td>
<td>New Cornerstone Investigator 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yilin WU 吴艺林</strong></td>
<td>Professor of Physics</td>
<td>University of Macau</td>
<td>Xplorer Prize 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zuankai WANG 王钻开</strong></td>
<td>Chair Professor of Nature-Inspired Engineering</td>
<td>University of Macau</td>
<td>Xplorer Prize 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pui In Mak 麦沛然</strong></td>
<td>Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering</td>
<td>University of Macau</td>
<td>Xplorer Prize 2022</td>
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Scientific Community

Fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, including dialogues, exchanges and the sharing of unpublished work
• Xplorer Symposia (closed door)
• Xplorer Forum (open to public)
• New Cornerstone Science Meetings (closed door)
Approaches & Underlying Principles

**Philosophy**
- Foster Original Innovation
- Encourage Free Exploration
- People, not Projects

**Approaches**

- Dedication to supporting **basic research** (as defined in program positioning)
- **Originality & breakthrough potential** given significant weight (in the review criteria)
- **Freedom** to propose what to do, encourage **bold ideas** (in the research plan)
- **Sufficient funds** allowing PIs to stay focused and avoid distractions
- **Flexibility** to change research topics, no KPI for deliverables (accommodating grant management)
- **Stable long-term support** (enabled through renewal)
- **Dynamic & supportive community** (with inter-disciplinary forums & scientific meetings)
### Application & Review Process

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<th>Screening</th>
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<td>Candidate</td>
<td>Self-nomination</td>
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<td>Interview</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Shortlisted candidates</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Factors</strong></td>
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<td>Final Approval</td>
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<td><strong>Guided by scientists</strong></td>
<td>~600 scientists involved in the selection; from China &amp; abroad</td>
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<td><strong>Three independent selection rounds</strong></td>
<td>Conducted by 3 separate groups of reviewers</td>
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<td><strong>Quality control &amp; “dark horse” candidates</strong></td>
<td>Review panel chairs select any borderline candidates, give any with demonstrated talent a second chance</td>
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We invite you to apply

Notice: the next round of applications will reopen in 2025.

New Cornerstone Investigator Program will be open for applications in early 2025. For inquiries, please email: contact@newcornerstone.org.cn
Thank you