UT Arlington electrical engineering professor wins Texas O'Donnell Award

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ARLINGTON - J.-C. Chiao, a UT Arlington electrical engineering professor, has been honored by The Academy of Medicine, Engineering and Science of Texas with an O'Donnell Award in Engineering for his pioneering achievements in developing implantable sensors that can help treat severe acid reflux.

Chiao, who joined the University in 2002, is the first UT Arlington O'Donnell Award recipient and was one of five Texas researchers honored during the 8th annual TAMEST conference in Austin this week.

Each year, the Edith and Peter O'Donnell Awards recognize rising Texas researchers who are addressing the essential role that science and technology play in society and whose work meets the highest standards of exemplary professional performance, creativity and resourcefulness.

In addition to treating severe acid reflux, Chiao’s work also can determine the effectiveness of drugs in the esophagus. He has developed a device that includes a battery-less strain sensor that can detect esophageal wall pressure or bladder volume.

In collaboration with other researchers, Chiao also has developed sensors known as neurostimulators that are designed to detect and block pain signals by transmitting electric signals into neurons.

Chiao said he was humbled by the honor.

“There are many excellent researchers at UT Arlington who deserve this award more than I do. I would like to share this honor with all my collaborators, colleagues and students,” Chiao said. “I enjoy doing my research and am thankful for having a great environment at UT Arlington in which to work. I believe the technology we’ve developed can help improve peoples’ lives.”

Chiao also is an adjunct associate professor of internal medicine at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and serves on the graduate faculty of the joint UT Arlington-UT Southwestern biomedical engineering program.
Other award winners were Margaret A. Goodell from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Kim Orth from UT Southwestern Medical Center for science, and David Fuller III and Duncan Hudson III for technology. The technology winners are employed by National Instruments in Austin.

“In concert with the original intent of the O’Donnell Awards, this year’s recipients exemplify extraordinary achievements by young investigators at the forefront of scientific discovery in their respective disciplines and areas of expertise,” said Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D., TAMEST’s 2010 president and chancellor of The University of Texas System. “Recognizing these outstanding achievements highlights the extremely high level of scientific research being conducted in Texas and underscores the need for research funding and STEM education critical to future innovation and maintaining a competitive edge in our state and nation.”

TAMEST was founded in 2004 by U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, Nobel Laureates Dr. Michael Brown and the late Dr. Richard Smalley to provide broader recognition of the state’s top achievers in medicine, engineering and science, and to build a stronger identity for Texas as an important destination and center of achievement in these fields.

Visit www.tamest.org for more information about the organization and the award winners.

Chiao’s work is representative of the research under way at The University of Texas at Arlington, a comprehensive research institution of nearly 33,000 students in the heart of North Texas. Visit www.uta.edu to learn more.

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