

# Collaborating across borders and disciplines

From mathematics and quantum physics to chemistry, six world-renowned scholars, members or foreign members of the French Academy of Sciences, gathered at City University of Hong Kong (CityU) to discuss blue sky science development in their fields. The event, initiated by CityU's Institute for Advanced Study (IAS), was held to celebrate productive scientific cooperation between France and Hong Kong. It also marked the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Philippe G. Ciarlet, University Distinguished Professor at CityU, and a senior fellow of IAS.

A prominent mathematician, Ciarlet is revered for his work analysing the finite element method, the mathematical theory of elasticity, plates, and shells, and applying differential geometry. Since joining CityU 16 years ago, he has been dedicated to developing scientific cooperation between France and Hong Kong by strengthening ties between the French Academy of Sciences and CityU. "He has not only helped to enhance the collaboration but also raised the standard of scientific research beyond mathematics," said Way Kuo, CityU president, opening the conference. "The efforts are consistent with CityU's drive to put scientific research at the forefront for students and faculty."

At Ciarlet's initiative, a series of high-profile lectures were held at CityU, involving members of the French Academy of Sciences, French Nobel laureates and Fields medalists, as well as other notable scientists. These

lectures usually focus on crucial contemporary issues, aiming to make research accessible to the general academic audience, and to disseminate knowledge to broader society.

For diplomats, there is difficulty in finding a common language between different countries and people, but that commonality can be found in science, said Alexandre Giorgini, Consul General of France in Hong Kong & Macau. "Science can be the unifying language and we highly support scientific exchange across the world."

Ciarlet expressed gratitude for the support of the French academic community for the lecture series. "When I began at CityU, they asked me to take this opportunity to promote the academy and the prestigious French academic institutions among the scientific community and the general public of Hong Kong," said Ciarlet. "That's why I launched this series."

The series provides an ideal platform for intellectual exploration, creative thinking and problem solving. They are well aligned to the IAS objectives of becoming an international centre of excellence for the advancement of technology and innovation. It brings together an interdisciplinary team of world-renowned scholars and researchers to find solutions to pressing global problems. Conferences and lectures such as those initiated by Ciarlet also help connect promising young scientists to world-leading experts and industry figures, and are a vital part of



IAS and CityU's endeavours.

The conference on 12 November was a highlight of the high-profile lecture series. It gathered IAS senior fellows, including: John Ball, professor of mathematics at Heriot-Watt University in UK; Serge Haroche, Nobel laureate in physics and IAS chairman; Jean-Marie Lehn, professor at the University of Strasbourg Institute for Advanced Study and Nobel laureate in chemistry; Tatsien Li, a mathematician from Fudan University in China; Pierre-Louis Lions from the Collège de France, and a Fields medalist; and Jean Salençon, professor emeritus at the École Polytechnique in France.

Jacob Huang, IAS executive director and Chair Professor of Materials Science at CityU, said that IAS was honoured to hold the event.

In closing the conference, he expressed his gratitude to the six distinguished speakers for their inspiring lectures, and reiterated IAS's commitment to bringing together an interdisciplinary team of world-renowned scholars to work with and mentor other research fellows and students at CityU. ■



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