



3 from MIT honored with Breakthrough Prizes

By **Felicia Gans** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 09, 2015

Three Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers were honored Sunday by the Breakthrough Prize organization, which honors scientists worldwide for their pioneering research.

Edward Boyden, an associate professor of media arts and sciences, biological engineering, and brain and cognitive sciences, was one of the five scientists to be honored with a life science award. He will receive \$3 million for his work in optogenetics, a technique that programs light to control electrical activity in human cells.

Boyden studies the circuits of the brain and a variety of brain disorders, including epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, and post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his staff biography on the MIT website.

Two other MIT researchers were honored with \$100,000 New Horizons recognitions, given to young scientists, according to a statement on the Breakthrough Prize website. Larry Guth, a professor of mathematics, and Liang Fu, an assistant professor of physics, received New Horizons in Mathematics and Physics prizes, respectively. Fu shared the award with B. Andrei Bernevig from Princeton University and Xiao-Liang Qi from Stanford University.

MIT physicist Alan Guth — Guth’s father — won the first Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics, MIT said.

The third annual ceremony, which took place at NASA’s Ames Research Center in Mountain View, Calif., awarded a total of \$21.9 million to scientists in life sciences, fundamental physics, and mathematics.

One of the founders of the prize, Facebook cofounder Mark Zuckerberg, said in a statement that scientists can solve the biggest problems.

“The Breakthrough Prize honors achievements in science and math so we can encourage more pioneering research and celebrate scientists as the heroes they truly are,” he said.

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