

Two Presidents from NCKU recognized as top 100 Asian scientists

NCKU Press Center

Dr. Huey Jen Jenny Su, the President of National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in Taiwan and Dr. Michael Lai Ming-Chiao, the former President of the University are featured in the latest edition of the 'Asian Scientist 100,' an annual listing of 100 prize-winning Asian researchers, academicians, innovators and leaders from across the Asia Pacific region.

Su, a public health expert, and Lai, a pioneer in coronavirus research, both are famed scientists in their own fields and highly esteemed leaders in higher education as well. This makes it an even greater news that now they are the only two honorees from Taiwan named in top 100 Asian Scientist in 2018.

Cited in the category of leadership, Su's outstanding achievement in leadership gained her a spot on top Asian Scientist. She was recognized with the 2017 Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health's Leadership Award for her timely and effective response to two emergency events in Taiwan: a dengue fever outbreak in Tainan City in 2015 and a magnitude 6.4 earthquake in 2016.

Also listed in the same category of leadership are Subra Suresh, President of Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Lam Khin Yong, NTU's Vice-President for research, Chang Meeman from China's Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, and Ajoy Kumar Ray from Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology.

Each of the honorees on Asian Scientist 100 has won a national or international prize in 2017 for their scientific research or leadership.

Spanning a diverse range of industries in science and technology, this year's selection comprises honorees from China, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.



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Woman Power Takes off at NCKU with Cross-national WUN Project: “Marriage Migrants in Asia”

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Professor Su-Lin Yu and supporting professors from the National Cheng Kung University’s Center for Gender & Women’s Studies are collaborating with 11 female scholars from Hong Kong, Macau and Japan to launch the “Marriage Migrants in Asia” project, which has been recognized by the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN) as one of the 14 most influential projects of 2018.

Through the conscientious efforts of these knowledgeable women, this unprecedented cross-national collaborative project aims to collect and analyze data acquired from field interviews and historical records. Social-statistics methods will be used to draw comparisons and initiate discussions regarding the findings from the project. The end goal is a holistic understanding of marriage migrants in Asia. The project will provide useful reference material for policymakers around the world.

Founded in 2000, the WUN is the world’s most robust alliance of research-intensive universities. As a leading global higher education network, the WUN focuses on solving global issues. Su-Lin Yu is a professor at National Cheng Kung University. Unable to ignore the plight of marriage migrants, Yu gathered professors from the NCKU Center for Gender & Women’s Studies, including Kai-ling Liu, Mei-tzu Tsai, Tiffany Hsu, Wei-ming Luh, and Le-kun Tan. She also reached out to professors from abroad, including Hsun-hui Tseng from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Susan Broomhall, Samina Yasmeen, and Loretta Baldassar from the University of Western Australia, and Sari K. Ishii from Rikkyo University in Japan. Su-Lin Yu is the first director of an NCKU-backed project to attend the WUN. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to undertake this important work, and conveyed hope that countries from around the world would be able to respect each other’s differences and learn from one another.

Su-Lin Yu recalled past advertisements for foreign brides in Taiwan, especially those for Vietnamese brides: “Vietnamese brides are charming, innocent, pretty and only NT\$250,000.” When one side of a cross-national marriage is disadvantaged, marital conflicts and even domestic violence are often the end result. Drawing from Anna W. Tang’s book *Frail Lotus*, Yu points out that marriage migrants often have to shoulder the burdens of the home and various other hardships. Many are oppressed and restrained by their dependence on their husband’s family. Many end up being deported on grounds of failing to give birth to a son or failure to meet their in-laws’ arbitrary expectations. Some of these marriage migrants are even pressured to sleep with their father-in-laws.

“There’s one woman from Cambodia who married into a Taiwanese family. They lived in the remote countryside. After her husband passed away from an illness, her in-laws treated her like an insane person because she wasn’t able to acclimate to their lifestyle and couldn’t communicate due to the language barrier. They considered having her carted off to a psychiatric ward, or forcing her into a marriage with someone else. Her situation was a very dire one.” Le-kun Tan, a member of the “Marriage Migrants in Asia” project and a specialist in research related to language communication, pointed out that Cambodia is actually a country with mixed languages and cultures. When this Cambodian woman was isolated in a remote rural area, she had little opportunity to interact with and understand wider society in Taiwan. She became trapped in a difficult situation. Sadly, these types of cases are all too common.



It's not all doom and gloom for marriage migrants, however. In recent years, there have been some inspiring cases of marriage migrants who were able to turn their lives around. For instance, Su-Lin Yu recalls the story of famous Vietnamese director Kim Hong Nguyen: "She came to Taiwan and married into a Taiwanese family when she was 21 years old. After suffering domestic abuse for many years, she plucked up her courage and ended her torturous marriage. She took her son with her, found part-time work, and lived a life of hardship for many years. Her second marriage to Tsung-lung Tsai, also a director, was the light at the end of the tunnel. With his support, Nguyen was able to produce a documentary called 'Out/Marriage' about the lives of her fellow marriage migrants. She no longer feels like she is disadvantaged and in need of others' pity. Today, she's a beautiful, independent, confident, and free woman. She's an admirable individual."

Su-Lin Yu is especially grateful to Chen Yuh-Neu, the dean of NCKU's College of Liberal Arts, for her unflagging support of the "Marriage Migrants in Asia" project. The project team is aiming to complete an academic book by the end of 2018. They hope that their efforts will effect positive change in society and ameliorate public preconceptions and misconceptions of marriage migrants. Project-related workshops will be conducted at both NCKU and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. NCKU will also hold lectures and special talks by members of the project, and open up channels of exchange with NCKU students and faculty on gender-related research. The "Marriage Migrants in Asia" project is estimated to conclude in one year's time, but those involved have already agreed to continue their collaboration on other research projects after this project has ended.

Founded on the cusp of the 21st century, the Worldwide Universities Network comprises 23 research-intensive universities across six continents. The alliance exists to pursue solutions to major global issues such as global warming, public health, global higher education and research, and cultural awareness, among others. In 2016, NCKU became the first university from Taiwan to join WUN. The WUN actively invites annual project proposals from member universities. WUN projects must involve three WUN member universities that represent at least two countries.



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NCKU Alumnus Dr. Paul Bosawai Popora Opens First Standard Clinic in the Solomon Islands

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Located 5,000 kilometers away from Taiwan, the Solomon Islands is one of Taiwan's few diplomatic allies. The 35-year-long exclusive friendship between both island nations is embodied in Dr. Paul Bosawai Popora, a graduate of National Cheng Kung University's (NCKU) College of Medicine. After receiving his bachelor's degree in July 2014, Popora returned to his home in the Solomon Islands to serve as the country's sole professionally trained doctor. In 2017, Popora took the first step towards realizing his dream vocation by starting his own clinical practice.



Dr. Popora's clinic is located on Guadalcanal, the principal island of the Solomon, and is the first standard medical building in the country. The building was built by civil engineering high school students who, under the guidance of Dr. Popora and the assistance of textbooks on architectural design, completed the construction within two years. Dr. Popora hopes that one day he can build a hospital replete with various medical departments, including emergency rooms, general surgery, gynecology, obstetrics, and pediatrics. It is hope that these resources would benefit the community by improving the quality of medical treatment. Dr. Popora's hopes and aspirations for the betterment of his community all started with his study at National Cheng Kung University.

The path to success is strewn with obstacles: "The only thing you must not do is give up!"

In 2004, Popora received a scholarship from the Taiwanese government and arrived in Taiwan to begin his studies, which required that he first learn Mandarin Chinese. Initially, the language was completely alien to him. Coupled with an intense case of homesickness, Popora wanted to return home immediately. However, after struggling through eight difficult months, he was ultimately admitted into National Cheng Kung University's College of Medicine in 2005. His first year was a trying one. The issues he had in his classes were mounting. He was ready to throw in the towel, and wrote to the college dean Ruey-Jen Sung: "I give up. I want to go home."

Dean Sung immediately called Popora in to talk to him face to face to try to dissuade him from leaving: "The only thing you must not do is give up!". With dean's encouragement, Popora was able to adjust his mindset. Setting his eyes on his goal of becoming a doctor, Popora forged ahead and faced all sorts of challenges head-on.

During his internship at NCKU Hospital, Popora became determined to reach his goal:

"When I was working at NCKU Hospital, I witnessed many doctors, nurses, and volunteers' selfless efforts and contributions. I knew I had to bring this medical technology back to my country." Initially, patients were unaccustomed to his skin color and accented Chinese, but they were moved after witnessing Popora's diligence and commitment. Popora left a deep impression on Ming-Fei Liu, a physician in the hospital's department of internal medicine: "Popora was always open to engaging in discussions with others and learning from those exchanges. Moreover, the medical records he recorded were detailed and substantial. He was also kind towards his patients and received praise from all around."

Moved by the acts of selflessness within the NCKU Hospital, Popora sets his heart on becoming a doctor

In July 2014, Popora received his bachelor's degree from NCKU's College of Medicine. In the following month,

Dr. Popora returned to his country to work at a clinic at GPPOL, the company that sponsored his studies in Taiwan. At GPPOL's clinic, he treated 2,500 patients free of charge on a monthly basis. Due to the grossly underdeveloped healthcare industry in the Solomon Islands, Dr. Popora was the island's sole physician, so he had to see patients across all departments in the clinic. This was reminiscent of his internship days in the NCKU Hospital. Nevertheless, Dr. Popora was spurred by his experiences working at the NCKU Hospital, and began promoting a volunteer program that centered on bettering the community through community development, healthcare, and education.

In order to stimulate community development, Dr. Popora pushed for a community revenue plan where 10% of the revenue would go into a community improvement fund. He donated half of his salary into to fund a village development project of improving the community's water source. Dr. Popora continued to offer his medical services at the Good Samaritan Hospital which had no physician. In addition, he would go to the Ghaobata Community Elementary School every Sunday to teach mathematics to the students there, hoping that these efforts would help students continue their studies.

Four years after returning home, Dr. Popora maintains close contact with his NCKU teachers and classmates. He says that he has never once forgotten about his experiences in Taiwan, and is immensely grateful to his professors, advisors, and the workers at the NCKU Hospital. Dr. Popora hopes that he can one day return to his alma mater and continue his studies in external medicine. "You must remember that I am also an NCKU ambassador in the Solomon Islands."

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NCKU as first university to offer a Circular Economy education program in Taiwan.

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Starting from Spring semester 2018, National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) will offer a new education program on Circular Economy. This is in response to the Tsai-Ing Wen government who set Circular Economy as one of her 5+2 spearhead strategies. Taiwan wants to create a more sustainable economy, with a smaller environmental impact on natural resources, as well as less dependence on importing resources. The circular economy focusses on reducing, reusing and recycling with an interesting business model.

“The NCKU Circular Economy program is named ‘Circular NCKU’ and it trains students to become the future workforce for companies and governments to innovate from the traditional ‘linear economy’-thinking towards ‘circular economy’-strategies. Competences on circular economy are relevant for any field, therefore the program is shaped as a 15 credit extra-curricular certificate open for students from any master degree.



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“This also creates the opportunity for a multi-disciplinary program in which students from various masters learn how to collaborate with each other and come to actual integrated solutions, benefitting people, planet and also profit”, says NCKU visiting expert Bart van Bueren. Bart has been teaching at NCKU at 7 different departments over the past 5 years. He is originally from the Netherlands; a country famed of its pioneering into the Circular Economy.

We also decided to engage more actively with the international student community. As this Circular NCKU program can easily be obtained in one semester, we warmly welcome any foreign exchange students to join this program to obtain the certificate. One way to make that possible, is to ensure all courses are provided in English.” , says prof Hsiao-Wen Wang, the Associate Vice President for International Affairs, who also worked on preparing this program. “NCKU is already offering various courses that include elements for Circular Economy-strategies, these courses are now embedded in the new Circular NCKU program. Additionally, we offer an introduction course to start, and a ‘pilot’ to proof student’s progress.”, prof Wang continues: “The multidisciplinary approach makes it also interesting for companies to collaborate by offering real cases of how their products and services can become more circular.”

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