

CITATION: PROFESSOR PETER SARNAK

Professor Peter Sarnak was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and completed his BSc degree at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1974. He was awarded the Herbert Le May prize for Applied Mathematics and the William Cullen Medal for the best graduate in the Faculty of Science in 1974.

He went on to complete his BSc Honours in Pure Mathematics also at the University of the Witwatersrand and was awarded the Unico Chemical Company Gold Medal for the Best Honours student in the Science Faculty in 1975.

Sarnak completed his PhD at Stanford under the supervision of Paul Cohen in 1980 and was appointed as an Assistant Professor at the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences in the same year. In 1987 Sarnak was appointed as a Professor at Stanford University and in 1991 he was appointed Professor at Princeton University, a position he currently still holds. Sarnak has concurrently held the position of Professor at the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton since 2007.

He is one of the world's leading mathematical scientists working in the fields of combinatorics and number theory. Sarnak is a member of the editorial boards of the top journals in these fields and has published over 120 research articles, 4 books, and has supervised 44 PhD students. He was elected as member of the National Academy of Sciences (USA) and Fellow of the Royal Society (UK) in 2002. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2010.

Sarnak is the recipient of many prizes and awards, all in recognition of his distinguished contribution to the fields of combinatorics and number theory.

He Sarnak has made a significant contribution to the development of mathematics in South Africa by presenting plenary lectures at joint congresses of the American Mathematical Society and the South African Mathematical Society held in South Africa in 1997 and 2011. These congresses played an important part in stimulating research amongst young mathematical scientists by informing them of international developments in the areas of combinatorics and number theory.

Sarnak was a member of a DST/NRF review panel set up to review the state of the mathematical sciences in South Africa. Together with members of the panel he visited many of the universities in South Africa to interview staff and students in the mathematical sciences.

The panel's report recommended the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in the Mathematical Sciences to focus on the development of high level research programmes for postgraduate students. The Centre of Excellence would also become a contact point for distinguished academics to meet and interact with staff and students to expose South African mathematical scientists to the latest developments and trends in the mathematical sciences. As a result of this report the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, has established a Mathematical Sciences Research Centre which is perfectly positioned to make a bid for a National Centre of Excellence.

Given Sarnak's distinguished contribution to the field of mathematics and his contribution to the development of mathematics in South Africa, we believe he is worthy of an Honorary Doctorate from the University of the Witwatersrand.