

Biography: Professor Choon Fong Shih

President, KAUST

Professor, Mechanical Engineering



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Professor Choon Fong Shih has been appointed Founding President and Professor of Electrical Engineering at KAUST. He assumed his duties as president, effective December 1, 2008.

Professor Shih received his doctorate from Harvard University in 1973. Thereafter, he led the Fracture Research Group at the General Electric Corporate Research Lab in the United States. In 1981, he joined Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

Professor Shih has made significant contributions in nonlinear fracture mechanics and computational methods for fracture analyses. With 150 publications in leading scientific journals, Professor Shih is listed by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) as among the world's most highly cited engineering researchers. Among his honors are the George Irwin Medal and the Ted Belytschko Applied Mechanics Award, from the American Society for Testing and Materials, and the American Society for Mechanical Engineers, respectively.

Professor Shih is a foreign associate of the U.S. National Academy of Engineering and a foreign honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was the inaugural recipient from Asia Pacific for the Chief Executive Leadership Award presented by the Council for Advancement and Support for Education. He has been awarded the French decoration "Chevalier" in the Order of the "Legion d'Honneur." He has been conferred honorary Doctor of Science degrees from Loughborough University (UK), Waseda University (Japan) and Brown University (US).

Professor Shih has been a consultant to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, among others. He is a member of the MIT Corporation Visiting Committee for the Department of Materials Science and Engineering.

After 30 years in the United States, Professor Shih returned to Singapore in 1996 as the founding director of Singapore's Institute of Materials Research and Engineering, and the following year, with concurrent appointment as the deputy vice-chancellor of the National University of Singapore (NUS). He was the founding president of the Materials Research Society of Singapore, which is affiliated with the International Union of Materials Research Societies.

In 2000, Professor Shih became president and vice-chancellor of NUS. In this capacity, he actively promoted NUS' global profile. He was a key driver for the formation of the International Alliance of Research Universities, an alliance of 10 of the world's leading research universities spanning four continents. He was the chairman emeritus of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), a consortium of 37 leading research universities modeled after the premier Association of American Universities (AAU). Professor Shih chaired the Governing Board of the APRU World Institute, an institute of advanced studies seeking to address scientific, social and economic issues of global importance.

Professor Shih has also served on a number of national-level committees in Singapore. He was the chairman of the Singapore-MIT Alliance Governing Board as well as an executive committee member of the Economic Development Board. He was a founding member of the Singapore International Foundation. He was also a board member of the National Research Foundation. Professor Shih also served on the Economic Review Committee tasked to develop wide-ranging strategies for re-making Singapore.