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‘At the Pinnacle’

Shuji Nakamura, a UC Santa Barbara professor of materials — and a Nobel laureate — has been awarded the 2017 Mountbatten Medal by the Great Britain-based Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), one of the world’s largest engineering institutions.

Nominated for the prestigious award by a panel of his peers, Nakamura was selected by IET “in recognition of his pioneering development of blue LEDs as high-efficiency, low-power light sources, and in particular their contribution to the reduction of the world’s carbon footprint.”

“This year we had a large number of entries and the standard was extremely high,” said Tim Constandinou, chair of the IET Awards and Prizes Committee. “The Achievement Awards allow us to recognize the huge impact that engineers have on all our lives. The winners are extremely talented and have achieved great things in their careers, whether they are a young professional demonstrating outstanding ability at the start of their journey or an engineer at the pinnacle of their career.”

Nakamura, who joined the UCSB faculty in 2000, is most certainly in the latter category. He is best known for his invention of the bright blue LED, for which he was selected as one of three winners of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2014. Considered at the time a holy grail of solid-state lighting, the invention of the blue LED paved the way for the creation of white LED, which has since revolutionized the world of lighting with its energy efficiency, sustainability and durability.

“It is a great honor to receive the IET’s Mountbatten Medal award,” Nakamura said. “The blue LEDs have been used as an efficient solid state lighting, which has contributed to overcome the global warming issues by reducing the consumption of energy, and thereby reducing carbon containing greenhouse gases.”

Nakamura and colleagues at UCSB’s Solid State Lighting and Energy Electronics Center continue to develop high-efficiency, high-power lighting by refining fabrication techniques, and creating laser-based lighting. They are also developing extremely energy efficient power electronics that could in the future reduce the energy consumption and improve the performance of electronics from cell phones to computers to automotive equipment and even the power grid.

“On behalf of the UCSB College of Engineering, I offer my sincere congratulations to Shuji Nakamura for being honored with the prestigious Mountbatten Medal,” said Dean Rod Alferness. “It is extremely satisfying to see that Professor Nakamura continues to be recognized not only for his extraordinary achievement in developing the bright-blue LED, but for his continued dedication and innovation in working with his UCSB colleagues to push the envelope of gallium-nitride–based semiconductors to enhance a wide range of applications.”

Nakamura will receive his medal November 15 at the 2017 IET awards ceremony in London.

The Mountbatten Medal is awarded for “an outstanding contribution, over a period, to the promotion of electronics or information technology and their application.” It was established by the National Electronics Council in 1992 and named after its first chairman, The Earl Mountbatten of Burma. Earl Mountbatten was president of the Institution of Electronic and Radio Engineers (IERE) in 1947-48 and 1961-62, which merged with the Institution of Electrical Engineers (now the IET) in 1998. He was also an honorary fellow.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we

draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.