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Professor Selected for Presidential Science and Engineering Award

November 1, 2007

MERCED - Shawn Newsam, an assistant professor in the School of Engineering at the University of California, Merced, has been selected for a prestigious award from the White House.

The Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) is bestowed by the president's Office of Science and Technology Policy on young researchers who have accomplished innovative research and community service. It is the highest honor bestowed by the United States government on young scientists and engineers, and Newsam is the first UC Merced faculty member to receive it.

"We are delighted at this high-level national recognition of Shawn Newsam's innovative research and great accomplishments and excited for the stature the award adds to our university," said Chancellor Steve Kang.

"Shawn's work in computer vision lies at the very forefront of research in this area, as recognized by this magnificent award," said Dean Jeff Wright of the UC Merced School of Engineering.

Newsam traveled to Washington, D.C. for today's award ceremony at the White House, where he was recognized for his interdisciplinary research in knowledge discovery in complex data. While a graduate student at UC Santa Barbara, he collaborated with geographers to develop tools for analyzing satellite imagery and with biologists to analyze microscope images of retinal detachment. During a postdoctoral research appointment at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, he worked with physicists to analyze large-scale computer simulations of physical phenomena and with national security analysts on surveillance applications. At UC Merced, Newsam is pursuing collaborative research with air pollution scientists on using computer vision to monitor air pollution in the Central Valley and with biologists on projects studying the health effects of nanoparticles and analyzing computer simulations of unstructured proteins.

The White House also recognized Newsam's "leading role in developing a new and innovative Computer Science and Engineering program at the first American research university built in the 21st century."

"I'm honored to receive this award, because it not only recognizes my research, but also my role in establishing UC Merced," Newsam said.

"Not only is Shawn establishing a world-class research program at UC Merced, but working tirelessly to build a remarkable new educational experience for our students," said Wright. "His work with teams of students through our Engineering Projects in Community Service (EPICS) program is helping students become fully engaged on their engineering career path."

Newsam is one of eight awardees nominated by the U.S. Department of Energy. The seven others come from research institutions across the country, including

The seven others come from research institutions across the country, including Cornell University, Columbia University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and several national laboratories. All eight DOE PECASE recipients have the chance today to display and explain their work in a poster session at the DOE headquarters.

The award includes a commitment from the DOE to underwrite Newsam's work with \$50,000 annually for the next five years.

Newsam was nominated for the award by engineering colleague Moe Dehghani at Livermore, where he completed a postdoctoral appointment before joining the founding faculty at UC Merced in 2005. Dean Wright consulted on the nomination. Newsam obtained his Ph.D. at UC Santa Barbara, his Master's degree at UC Davis and his undergraduate degree at UC Berkeley.

"Shawn's work with us was groundbreaking," said Dehghani. "We're pleased to see him moving on to a professorship at an institution of growing prestige like UC Merced, and adding to that prestige by winning awards like PECASE."

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