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NOBELS IN CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS GO TO WOODROW WILSON FELLOWS

PRINCETON, N.J.—Two of this year's Nobel Prizes have gone to fellows of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation: John C. Mather, a NASA astrophysicist, and Roger D. Kornberg of the Stanford University School of Medicine.

Dr. Mather, Goddard Fellow and senior astrophysicist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center and a 1968 Honorary Woodrow Wilson Fellow, shared the 2006 Nobel Prize for Physics with colleague George F. Smoot for their work in measuring the temperature of cosmic microwave background radiation.

Using data collected through NASA's Cosmic Background Explorer, Drs. Mather and Smoot identified minute variations in the temperature of the universe's background radiation that essentially confirms the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe. Noted theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking greeted the 1992 findings as "the most important discovery of the century, if not of all time."

A graduate of Swarthmore College, Dr. Mather received an NSF Fellowship in 1968, the same year he was invited to become a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, and entered the doctoral program in physics at the University of California-Berkeley, where he received the Ph.D. in 1976 with a 4.0 GPA. He began his work as a postdoctoral fellow at the Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York in 1974 and has been on staff at the Goddard Space Flight Center since 1976.

Dr. Kornberg, sole recipient of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, created the first images of enzymes in action as they copied genetic instructions for constructing protein molecules. The X-ray crystallography images, so detailed that individual atoms are visible, were published in 2001 and represented the culmination of 20 years' work.

The structural biologist, who is Stanford's Mrs. George A. Winzer Professor of Medicine, received a 1967 Woodrow Wilson Fellowship after graduating from Harvard University, then completed the Ph.D. in chemistry at Stanford. His father, biochemist Arthur Kornberg, received the 1959 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

This year's Nobel announcements mark the second time that two Woodrow Wilson Fellows have received Nobel Prizes in the same year. In 1997, physicists Steven Chu and William D. Phillips, both 1970 Woodrow Wilson Fellows, won jointly for their work with France's Claude Cohen-Tannoudji on a technique that uses laser light to trap and cool atoms.

Awarded from 1945 through the early 1970s, the original Woodrow Wilson Fellowships, designed to attract the best and brightest undergraduates across a range of fields into college teaching, offered full support for doctoral studies to as many as 1,000 Fellows annually at the height of the program.

Today the alumni of the original Fellows program include 13 Nobel Laureates, one Fields Medalist in mathematics, two U.S. Poets Laureate, one recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, eight Pulitzer Prize recipients, 30 MacArthur Fellows, one Academy Award winner, and thousands of leading scholars and intellectuals, as well as leaders in business, the nonprofit sector, government, journalism, and the arts.

A partial list of some of the many distinguished Fellows from various Woodrow Wilson programs is available on the Woodrow Wilson Web site at <http://www.woodrow.org/fellows>. Contact Beverly Sanford, at (609) 452-7007, ext. 181 or sanford@woodrow.org, for additional information.

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The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation has its origins in a now-famous fellowship program, begun in 1945, which helped the United States create a great generation of college teachers and intellectual leaders. Today's Woodrow Wilson continues to cultivate excellence in teaching and learning at every level of education, putting the arts and sciences at the service of democracy.