

David Gross Receives 2008 Honorary Degree From Cambridge

Elaborate Ceremony Marks Cambridge Conferment Of Honorary Degree on Physicist David Gross
Sunday, June 22, 2008



(https://www.kitp.ucsb.edu/sites/default/files/kitp/news/cambridge_conferment_honorary_degree.jpg) Cambridge, U.K. — David J. Gross, director of the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics (KITP) at the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB), received a 2008 honorary degree from the University of Cambridge in "scarlet-day" ceremonies held in the Senate-House on June 23. The degree was conferred by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh acting in his capacity as Chancellor of the University.

According to University officials, an honorary degree is the highest accolade Cambridge can give. The University Statutes provide for conferment of degrees honoris causa on "members of the royal Family, British subjects who are of conspicuous merit or have done good service to the State or to the University, and foreigners of distinction" (this last category including Gross).

The University has been conferring the degree for over 500 years. One of the earliest references to the degree dates to 1493, when the University honored the poet John Skelton.

The day of conferment is declared a "scarlet-day," when professors wear "festal" gowns and all other University members attending the ceremony don full academic garb. Gross, who received an honorary doctor of science degree, wore a gown of scarlet cloth and a "bonnet" of black velvet with gold cords and tassels.

University and College buildings fly flags for the occasion, and University Church bells peal to mark the transit of two colorful academic processions around the yard of the Senate-House prior to the ceremony indoors. The second procession led by two ceremonial figures called "Esquire Bedells," who carry the University's large silver maces, includes the honorary degree recipients themselves, who are welcomed into the Senate-House by a fanfare of trumpets. The ceremonial proceedings are conducted entirely in Latin.

Gross, one of five 2008 honorary degree recipients, was cited for his scientific achievements, including the discovery of asymptotic freedom for which he shared the 2004 Nobel Prize in Physics. This discovery explains how the strong force operates in the nucleus of atoms such that the force grows stronger as the distance increases between the quarks that make up the protons and neutrons in the nucleus of atoms.

Gross, formerly holder of the Thomas Jones Chair of Mathematical Physics at Princeton University, is the Frederick W.

Gluck Professor of Theoretical Physics at UCSB. He served as Rothschild Visiting Professor at the Isaac Newton Institute at Cambridge University in the fall of 2007.



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