

Presentation of Overseers Excellence in Research Prize and Medal

October 7, 2009

President Robert A. Altenkirch

Thank you, Emil, and good afternoon.

I'm very glad that Cynthia Mascone has joined us to present the NJIT Overseers Excellence in Research Prize and Medal to Professor Sirkar. As Emil mentioned, Cynthia is editor-in-chief of the journal *Chemical Engineering Progress*, which is published by the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. A chemical engineer herself, Cynthia has also held leadership positions in the Institute, an organization that has accorded Kam Sirkar additional significant honors during his career.

Last year, the first recipient of the Overseers Excellence in Research Prize and Medal was Distinguished Professor of Physics Philip Goode, who is with us today on stage. Phil's work in solar physics looks outward into the depths of space. Kam works on a very different scale. In the realm of membrane-separation technology, the nanometer is a frequently used unit of measurement. That's a billionth of a meter, or approximately ten hydrogen atoms in a row.

Metaphorically, the dramatic contrast between seeking new knowledge across the solar system and at the nanometer level brings to mind the scope of research initiatives at NJIT. It is also conducive of reflection on the spectrum of benefits these efforts offer for improving the lives of people around the globe. The real-world benefits are numerous within the field where few, if any, can match Kam Sirkar's expertise. One of the most critical has already been cited — the potential of membrane-separation technology to help alleviate the global shortage of pure water. It's a shortage that's growing even in the United States.

The richly diverse scope of research at NJIT also depends on an equally diverse base of support. The Overseers Excellence in Research Prize and Medal honors outstanding individuals who clearly merit such recognition. But it pays

equal tribute to everyone who assists these individuals in their pioneering endeavors, and whose dedication helps to sustain an environment where endeavors of this nature can come to fruition.

Since 1881, when NJIT was founded as Newark Technical School, our governing and advisory boards have been unwavering in their commitment to all aspects of this enterprise. While this is a day of special recognition for Kam, it is also appropriate to express our appreciation for the dedication of all those who serve on the Board of Overseers. Every member of the Board has an essential role in advancing the mission of our university.

Now, please join me in welcoming Cynthia Mascone, who will say a few words before we present Kam with the NJIT Overseers Excellence in Research Prize and Medal for 2009.

We now have the honor and pleasure of presenting the 2009 NJIT Overseers Excellence in Research Prize and Medal to Distinguished Professor Kamalesh Sirkar. First, the medal ... and now a check that in size matches the scope of Professor Sirkar's achievements.