



Prestigious Prize For Chemistry Professor

SWINDON professor Michael Willis has received a prestigious award from the Royal Society of Chemistry, honouring the research he and his students from the University of Oxford have carried out. Michael, 43, originally from Stratton St Margaret, received the body's Catalysis in Organic Chemistry prize for their work, which may lead to improvements in the work of chemists and agricultural chemists.

My work looks at discovering catalysts that allow us to prepare useful molecules more efficiently, more selectively, more easily, and in ways that produce less waste and consume less energy than before. It is really nice to get the recognition although I'd like to stress it is not just me as I'm part of a team of around 16 people who are part of this research.

Michael leads a group from the university's department of chemistry, who carry out synthetic organic chemistry research. To address our aims we focused on the development of new reactions, reagents and strategies for asymmetric synthesis, often employing catalytic techniques.

Dr Robert Parker, the Royal Society of Chemistry's chief executive, praised the efforts of Michael and his team. He said: Each year we present prizes and awards to chemical scientists who have made a considerable contribution in industry or academia. We're working to shape the future of the chemical sciences for the benefit of science and humanity and these prizes and awards give recognition to true excellence in their fields. Recognition from the body is often a stepping stone to greater prizes, with 47 of the society's previous winners receiving Nobel Prizes.

Michael, who joined the University of Oxford in 2007 after previously working at the University of Bath, said: I wouldn't expect to get a Nobel Prize but I'm very pleased with this award. Moving forward we are going to carry on in the same vein and develop new theories and research. The true achievement for us would be to see businesses, organisations and individuals applying the science which we are looking into.

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