

Cattell Sabbatical Awardee Announced

February 28, 2011

James McKeen Cattell was one of the foremost pioneers of psychological science, striving throughout his career to establish psychology as an experimental science through the use of statistical methods and quantification of data. In 1921, Cattell was instrumental in the establishment of the Psychological Corporation, and, in 1942, he donated 600 of his 1,000 shares in the corporation to establish the James McKeen Cattell Fund to support “scientific research and the dissemination of knowledge with the object of obtaining results beneficial to the development of the science of psychology and to the advancement of the useful application of psychology.”

The James McKeen Cattell Fund Fellowships, created in 1974, allow researchers to extend their sabbatical leave for one or two semesters to pursue new research. Those researchers awarded the Fellowship are committed to the scientific study of human behavior and the application of psychological science to the improvement of human welfare.

This year’s Cattell Fund Fellowship recipient is Jeansok Kim, an Associate Professor of Psychology & Neurobiology and Behavior at the University of Washington in Seattle. He received his PhD in Behavioral Neuroscience from UCLA in 1991, and has spent much of his career investigating the effects of stress on the brain and cognition, often focusing on how stress detrimentally influences the hippocampus. “The Cattell Award will give me an opportunity to learn and incorporate new techniques into my research,” says Kim. “With a new arsenal of techniques, questions that could not be addressed due to technical limitations can now be effectively tackled.”

During his sabbatical, Kim will continue investigating the hippocampus, especially how stress affects synaptic plasticity, neural activity, and behavior. He will be spending six months of his sabbatical leave in Amsterdam, working at the Vrije Universiteit with Oliver Steidl, learning a newly developed remote recording technique that will allow him to simultaneously record brain cell and heart rate activities in free moving rats. Kim will work to incorporate his findings into a systems-level model of the neurobiological impact of stress that can organize data, predict results, and generalize to other cognitive

processes. He believes that it is necessary to identify the basic elements of the central stress mechanism in order to understand and thus alter the detrimental effects of stress on the brain.

Besides incorporating new techniques into his research, Kim is looking forward to focusing more of his attention on his lab and his students. “I can spend more time in the laboratory directly working with my students,” he says. “I believe that you learn more and have more fun by actually doing the work in the lab.”

APS partners with the Cattell Fund in promoting the Fellowship program. More information on the Cattell Fund Fellowships is available at <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/awards/cattellfund>.