2017 ACM SIGACT Distinguished Service Prize Awarded to Alistair Sinclair

June 20, 2017

ACM SIGACT awards its 2017 Distinguished Service Prize to Alistair Sinclair for his role in the spectacular success of the Simons Institute for the Theory of Computing in taking collaboration in our field to an entirely new level.

Alistair's service as the Associate Director of the Institute from its inception on July 1, 2012, went far beyond the call of duty. He has

- led the transformation of Calvin Lab on the UC Berkeley campus from a collection of dingy biochemistry labs to a beautiful, functional space that serves the needs for quiet contemplation as well as for interaction;

- built and closely supervised a superb administrative staff that smoothly runs this large operation and caters to all needs of its visitors;

- solicited and helped organize an intensive scientific program that stretches the borders of theoretical computer science by exploring new connections at the same time as it fosters growth at the core of the discipline;

- used the budget to optimize for diversity across our field, including the recruitment of cohorts of outstanding postdocs as well as senior participants from a global pool.

Alistair has led this effort with total dedication, a clear vision of a big picture, a creative architectural vision, attention to the smallest detail, and a remarkable skill at bringing the best people on board, including extracting their commitment to long-term physical presence. Organizer after organizer of the semester-long programs acknowledges Alistair's total engagement with each program, his sound guidance at every stage from planning to running the event coupled with his steely resolve to meet deadlines and bring each program to success.

The end result has been a new environment and a scientific program that have been a game-changer for Theory. At least three recent "Best papers" of STOC and FOCS have been conceived at the Institute. The Institute has become a magnet for a host of activities that advance our field and benefit the career development of its participants, representing a wide cross-section of our community.

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With this award, ACM SIGACT recognizes Alistair Sinclair's extraordinary contribution to building a unique institution to further collaboration across the Theory community.

Prize Committee: Lance Fortnow, Chair (Georgia Tech), László Babai (University of Chicago), Avi Wigderson (Institute of Advance Study).