Zhu Han, professor of electrical and computer engineering at the Cullen College of Engineering at the University of Houston, is having a good year.

He’s been awarded a 2018 Moores Professorship, a University-level honor awarded annually to UH faculty members who have made outstanding contributions in research, teaching and service. Each Moores Professor receives a $10,000 annual stipend, and the professorship is renewable every five years.

Han, who started in 2008 as an assistant professor in the electrical and computer engineering department, considers the award an honor and a significant reward. He compared his career in academia to climbing a mountain.

“In the beginning it feels difficult and daunting, he said. But when you reach the top, it’s beautiful and an achievement.”

This isn’t the only reward Han found at the top of the academia mountain. He is also part of a multi-university team that received a $7.5 million Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI) grant to use Mean Field Game Theory to analyze social behavior and predict outcomes. He brings his research interests in game theory, wireless networking, security and big data to the team, and will get $1.2 million of the award.

Other accolades earned by Han include: becoming a Fellow of the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) in 2014 for his contributions to resource allocation and security in wireless communication; being named IEEE Distinguished Lecturer in 2015; and receiving a National Science Foundation CAREER Award in 2009.
One wall of his office showcases all of his awards and achievements, framed and neatly displayed.

When asked what he’s proudest of achieving in his career, Han points to another part of his office. This side showcases frame after frame of smiling former students he has mentored through the years.

“Those photos were taken just before they were leaving UH as graduates and moving onto the next chapter,” Han said. “You can see how happy they are. I’m proudest of my students.”

He hopes that he’s helped his students be intellectually curious and independent thinkers that they will not only be useful in society, but become leaders.

Han’s honors and achievements are celebrated by his Cullen College family. “We are very happy to see Professor Zhu Han receive such a prestigious honor and be recognized at the University-level for his outstanding commitment to shaping the next generation of engineers,” said Joseph W. Tedesco, Elizabeth D. Rockwell Dean of the UH Cullen College. “He is an extraordinary researcher, a dedicated teacher and we couldn’t be prouder to have him on our team.”

Other Cullen College faculty honored by various University awards are:

Christiana Chang, instructional assistant professor of mechanical engineering, won a Teaching Excellence Award in the Instructor/Clinical category. This award honors outstanding teaching effort.

Jose Luis Contreras-Vidal, professor of electrical and computer engineering, won an Undergraduate Research Mentoring Award. This award recognizes faculty with at least five years mentorship involvement making a significant impact in their field by supporting and mentoring undergraduate students in research and scholarship. Contreras-Vidal is known for working to improve prosthetics with brain-computer interfaces.

Jacinta Conrad, associate professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering, and Yan Yao, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering, received Awards of Excellence in Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity for the 2017-18 academic year.

All five professors will be honored at the Faculty Excellence Award Dinner at the Hilton University of Houston on April 26.

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