

Professor Erol Gelenbe at Imperial since 2003

Professor Peter Cheung, Head of EEE, Imperial College London

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honoured Guests and colleagues from Imperial College, welcome to this very special occasion to celebrate Professor Erol Gelenbe's academic achievements and to mark his 70th birthday, which happened about a month ago.

My name is Peter Cheung and until two weeks ago, I was Head of the EEE Department for the past seven years. I have the privilege of introducing Erol today by say something about his academic achievements as a member of my department.

Erol joined us in 2003 from University of Central Florida as the Dennis Gabor Professor. It was clear to all of us, who were involved in hiring him, that he was a star researcher in his field, and had won many awards and accolades, and when I visited his home in Florida, was already well settled in the US with a beautiful house. Yet, he chose to take a significant pay cut and join our department. Some of us were wondering why, and soon I found out that, among many factors, the most important was that his and Deniz's son was living in London and that was a significant draw. Erol's son is coming to join us this evening for the banquet, and I must remember to thank him for his part in attracting Erol to us back in 2003.

The twelve years that Erol spent with us so far has been marked with many achievements. He continues to publish widely in many top academic journals. To date his work has attracted over 13,000 citations and an h-index of 65, the highest in our department.

He invented various mathematic models for network modeling, including the G-Networks, the Random Neural Networks, and contributed to various commercial systems such as QNAP and FLEXSIM.

Since 2003, he graduated 15 PhD students at Imperial. This adds to a vast army of previously graduated PhD students of his during his academic career, many of them are here for this event and will be speaking during the week.

At Imperial College, we also take teaching very seriously. Erol is no exception. He has, since his first arrival, been teaching courses on our UG programmes and has always attracted very good course evaluations.

Erol is definitely a workaholic – I am sure Deniz will agree with me on this. I remember that more than one occasion he would drop by my office with clear excitement. He has just finished a paper on some topic he was working on and the grin in his face would betray the satisfaction he derived from such activities. He also travels extensively giving seminars, participating on panels etc. I think he must have accumulated enough air miles by now that he could probably have free upgrades for many years to come.

Erol has also been very successful in attracting research funding. He participated in two large UK's programme grants: The EPSRC Aladdin project, and the SATURN programme grant with BT. He is also part of many EU funded projects, all have interesting acronyms: CASCADAS, Fit4Green, PANACEA, NEMESYS, DIESIS, just to name a few.

He also helped to promote the international reputation of the Department through the recognition he received since he joined us twelve years ago. He was elected to the French National Academy of Engineering (2008), the Royal Academy of Belgium (2015), the National Science Academies of Hungary (2010) and Poland (2013), and Academia Europaea (2005). He is the first non-American to receive the ACM SIGMETRICS Award (2008), and also received Hungary's "Dennis Gabor Memorial Medal" (2012), and IET's Oliver Lodge Medal (2010).

While at Imperial he was awarded France's "Knight of the Legion of Honour" (2014) and Italy's Commander of Merit (2005), Honoris Causa Doctorates by Bogazici University (Istanbul) in 2004 and University of Liege (Belgium) in 2006.

As you can see, introducing Erol is both easy and hard. It is easy because there is so much to say about him, even though I only covered twelve of his long illustrious years. It is also hard because, if I am not careful, I could be speaking for half an hour or more.

Erol taught me many things in the past decade that help me be a better academic. But among all the things he taught me, there is one thing that I will never forget. During the first week he was here, we were celebrating his arrival with a very nice bottle of Champagne. He showed me how to open the bottle proper way. To this day, I can still open a bottle without losing a drop! Thank you Erol.