



Yan Chen Recipient of the 2019 Carolyn Shaw Bell Award

Dr. Yan Chen, Daniel Kahneman Collegiate Professor of Information in the School of Information at the University of Michigan, is the recipient of the 2019 Carolyn Shaw Bell Award. The award is given annually by the American Economic Association's Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP), to recognize and honor an individual who has furthered the status of women in the economics profession. This award will be presented at the annual CSWEP business meeting and award ceremony held during the 2020 AEA Meeting in San Diego.

Professor Chen is also Research Professor, Research Center for Group Dynamics, at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, and Distinguished Visiting Professor at the School of Economics and Management at Tsinghua University, where she is Director of the Economics Science and Policy Experimental Lab. Professor Chen has held visiting positions at Stanford University, UC Berkeley, and the University of Bonn. She earned her PhD in Social Science (Economics) at Caltech in 1995.

Professor Chen is a meticulous scholar and award-winning teacher, whose contributions to advancing women in economics are many. She was a participant in the first CSWEP-sponsored mentoring program (COFFE) in 1998, and her cohort continues to support each other today. This experience no doubt shaped Professor Chen's own efforts as mentor for a cohort of women through CSWEP's CeMENT workshop in 2006. One of the letters supporting her nomination packet states, "I firmly believe that my participation in the CeMENT program changed the trajectory of my academic career. I am forever grateful to Yan for her personal mentorship."

As President of the Economic Science Association (2015-2017), Professor Chen spearheaded numerous changes designed to make the ESA more supportive of its many women members. The ESA is an international organization of experimental economists with about 2000 members and holds four conferences per year (one international and three regional -- US, Europe, Asia). Although the ESA membership has been nearly half women, Professor Chen was only the second female president of ESA; the first was Elizabeth Hoffman (1989-91). Under Professor Chen's leadership, the ESA moved to enhance the gender balance of its journal editors, its keynote speakers, and the three ESA sessions at the annual ASSA meetings. When Professor Chen took office, she added many specific mentoring activities to the program of the annual and regional meetings. First, she developed a Junior Mentoring Program consisting of peer cohorts, modeled on the CeMENT structure. These groups met at the annual World Meeting of the ESA, making CSWEP-style mentoring available to women outside the US. She organized sessions at each of the organization's annual meetings, assembling panels of leading scholars to focus on topics such as: pathways to tenure, publishing research, writing grants, and targeting top journals. She also organized "women's tables" at the conference lunches, where women could meet and

chat informally. These activities have been hugely popular, and have made the ESA meetings a more welcoming environment for women and for junior scholars more generally. At the end of her term as President, the ESA asked Professor Chen to stay on the Executive Committee in the newly-created position of Director of Mentoring.

At Michigan, Professor Chen is known for the inclusiveness of her weekly research group meetings, where faculty and students at all levels are encouraged to participate and ask questions. She coauthors with her students and with junior faculty. In her leadership positions, she is described as making changes to institutional rules and search processes to make sure that all candidates are treated fairly. Her supporting letters note her awareness of gender imbalances in conference speakers and editorial boards, and her willingness to contact organizers to make suggestions for appropriate speakers and editors to add.

The fifteen women and five men who write in support of Professor Chen's nomination include many students and formal mentees. These describe her sensible advice, as well as her kindness, patience, and generosity as an advisor. Also notable, however, are the letters from women from around the world who come from outside her formal circles. These describe her reaching out to them as assistant professors, providing on-the-spot feedback on research talks, extending invitations to give seminars, and making new connections. For example, a professor from Australia describes meeting Professor Chen and their continued interactions over years and remarks: "Yan and I are not connected through any institution or organization, which means she has absolutely no reason to provide mentorship to me except for a genuinely generous heart, and sincere hope for the advance of a young woman's career."

Professor Chen is in particular very active in China, where she has strong involvement with several Chinese universities and comes into contact with many students. For example, a professor at a university in China describes contacting Professor Chen as a "total stranger" and receiving an extremely helpful response, ultimately leading to a collaboration.

As a researcher, Yan Chen is an intellectual leader and role model in the experimental economics community. Her work is rigorous and insightful, and she has made important contributions in formal theory and in experimental research both in the lab and in the field. Her work touches on topics such as: the design of institutions for public and private goods; the importance of group identity for decision making, including in the gig economy; online communities, fundraising and exchange; and the allocation of important but un-marketed goods such as student housing. As Dean Thomas Finholt notes in his nomination letter, "...part of Professor Chen's power and effectiveness as a mentor is due to her superior scholarship. She is a consummate researcher who is able to articulate the tacit knowledge of research and writing processes to her mentees."

Named after the first Chair of CSWEP, the Carolyn Shaw Bell Award was created as part of the 25th Anniversary celebration of the founding of the CSWEP and is given annually since 1998 to an individual who has furthered the status of women in the economics profession through example, achievements, increasing our understanding of how women can advance in the economics profession or mentoring others. From most recent to first, previous recipients of the Carolyn Shaw Bell Award are: Rohini Pande,

Rachel Croson, Cecelia Rouse, Janet Currie, Hilary Hoynes, Rachel McCulloch, Catherine C. Eckel, Sharon Oster, Elizabeth Hoffman, Elizabeth E. Bailey, Anne Carter, Olivia S. Mitchell, Barbara Fraumeni, Claudia Goldin, Barbara Bergmann, Robin L. Bartlett, Margaret Garritsen de Vries, Francine Blau, Marianne Ferber, Eva Mueller, Sandra Ohrn Moose, Alice M. Rivlin.

CSWEP is a standing committee of the American Economic Association charged with promoting the careers and monitoring the progress of women economists. It sponsors mentoring and networking activities, conducts an annual survey of economics departments, and distributes professional development materials and career advice. CSWEP endeavors to raise awareness of the challenges that are unique to women's careers in economics and of best practices for increasing diversity in the economics profession.

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