

Dean's Report 2010

Two unpleasant events in the past year had some affects on our institute. The recent flooding in some areas caused severe damage to many houses, cars, and other belongings of Korat people, including five of our institute members. We saw help come from many directions. Some cash donation directly came to the institute for helping our affected members, even though we could not give those donors a receipt for tax reduction. After buying food and necessary things for their daily uses, there still were over fifteen thousand Bahts left. So the money was equally distributed to the five members. Thanks to Pooky (School of Remote Sensing) for delivering all the stuff to the places as near as possible to our affected members' houses so that they could pick them up until the flooding stopped.

The other event was the political strike by the red shirts which was finally up to the boiling point in April and May. This might seem to have not much effect on SUT or our institute. However, it almost caused severe disruption to an event preparing for the celebration of the 20th founding anniversary of SUT, in which HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn had scheduled to preside over. Prof. Dr. Jeffrey Hoffman, an American astronaut who accepted our invitation to give a speech on 29th July, finally canceled his trip to Thailand due to the violence. This leaved us a couple months to find another appropriate astronaut. We sent many emails out trying to contact anyone who might be able to help us contact other astronauts. It was quite short notice and we received all negative answers. I myself already gave up, but thanks to the rector who asked us to be patient and believed that eventually we would get another astronaut coming. Finally, with his help and connection to his friend, Dr. Nipant Chitasombat who was on leave to work at NASA during that time, we got Dr. Leroy Chiao, an American born Chinese who also had very impressive records on space flights.

In other respects, the past year has been one in which there has been much that is cheering to report about our institute.

We saw a great deal of activities during "Suranaree Nithad" to celebrate the 20th founding anniversary of SUT at the end of July. Our

institute joined in and was responsible for many of such activities, such as the academic exhibition in Surapat Building 2, a speech given by the astronaut, and many sport competitions.

There are many people to whom we are extremely grateful by putting their extra mind or labor to the above events. Assist. Prof. Dr. Yupaporn Chaiseha very much concerned about the setting of our posters and flowers at Surapat Building 2 during Suranaree Nithad. She and Assist. Prof. Dr. Rattikorn Yimnirun were always around in the building each day to check if everything was ok. Assist. Prof. Dr. Arjuna Chaiyasena was in charge in translation of the speech given by an invited astronaut. He put up with practicing simultaneous translation from English to Thai of the two astronauts' speeches, first with the speech and lecture given by Prof. Dr. Jeffrey Hoffman who canceled the trip to SUT, and later on with those by Dr. Leroy Chiao. In the last two weeks before the actual event on 29th July, he and Khun Sukanya Wibulkul, the SUT fastest computer typing person from the Division of Correspondence, Documents and Legal Affairs, were practicing everyday for two hours each day using Dr. Leroy Chiao's video clips they found on Utube. Dr. Leroy Chiao's talk on "View from the on-High: Adventures of a Professional Astronaut" with over a hundred pictures and some videos went very well in the Wittayapat Auditorium in the morning. The following talk by Dr. Saran Posayajinda, Deputy Director of the National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand, was given in the afternoon under the title of "Amazing Astronomical Images". All the impressive images shown during his talk were taken by himself. Many high school students had to sit in two 300 seat rooms watching the life broadcast by CCTV, since we didn't have enough seats for students from schools those contacted us late. Many thanks to Assist. Prof. Dr. Chinorat Kobdaj and our staffs for managing very well with over a thousand high school kids. The faculties from our Sport Science Program and staffs from the Sports and Health Center helped to organize many sport competitions during Suranaree Nithad week as well. The latest sport activity, SUT Mini-Half Marathon 2010 just finished on 9th January, 2011.

The institute in collaboration with the institute of Medicine hosted "*The 1st Frontier Technology of Stem Cell Therapy Conference and Workshops*" on 22 - 26 March. It was well attended by leading

researchers both from Thailand and abroad, even though the political strike was heating up during that time. Thanks to Assist. Prof. Dr. Wilairat Leraanansaksiri who was the main responsible person for the conference and workshop. The following month we, especially Dr. Pongrit Krubphachaya, the Deputy Dean, were busy with the training of science teachers on the topic of "*Frontier Science and Technology*" from 29th April to 2nd May. It was a trial project of the former Science Minister, who herself came to preside over the opening ceremony. The responses and evaluation by over 150 participating teachers turned out to be very good. Since it was a political project, after changing the Science Minister, the project will probably be forgotten.

On the research and academic sides, the School of Physics came on top again for the second successive year, since the TRF started the research assessment exercise down to school level two years ago. The tendency of the numbers of papers published by our faculties was increasing from 57 papers in 2008 to 82 in 2009 and, in the past year, 97 papers were published, counted at around mid of December 2010. In addition, 10 manuscripts have been accepted and in press. One of these articles by Dr. Worawat Meewasana, as the first and corresponding author (another rising star of the School of Physics), and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Prayoon Songsiririthigul will be published in Nature Materials with journal impact factor (JIF) of about 30. Wow! In 2009, Dr. Worawat published in Nature Physics with JIF of 17. Two of his many papers were published in Science (JIF ~ 30) in 2005 and 2007, respectively. The ratio of the numbers of papers published in international journals to the faculty members of our institute in 2010 is about 1.4:1. This helped to rise up the overall ratio of the university from 0.3 in 2009 to about 0.6 in 2010.

In terms of research grants, we had record of only those were passed through our research department. The numbers were fluctuated around 30 mB per year with 29.9 mB in 2007, 32.5 mB in 2008, and 24.1 mB in 2010. The actual research grants received by our faculties could be much higher than these, since many research projects could not be recorded by our research department. It will be even better in 2011 with the money from both NRU and NRCT. Over 13 mB (more than 40% of the extra research money from the NRCT of ~ 32 mB) has been allocated to our institute.

For RGJ scholarship batch 13, four scholarships are awarded to our faculties, including Prof. Dr. Kritsana Sagarik, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anan Tongraar, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jatuporn Wittayakun, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wipa Suginta. Many qualified faculties didn't apply for the scholarship and we could have got more otherwise. There are 142 RGJ scholarships received by SUT faculties - up until now - since batch 1; 108 of these were received by the faculties from our institute.

Just announced by the Office of National Research Council of Thailand, a *Good Ph. D. Thesis Award* for the year 2010 was given to Dr. Sirichok Jungthawan for his Ph.D. thesis on "Effects of Ordering in III-V Semiconductor Alloy Systems: a Theoretical and Computational Study" under supervision of Prof. Dr. Sukit Limpijumnong. He will receive 50,000 B for that. In 2009, Dr. Warawat Meewasana got a *Very Good Ph. D. Thesis Award* and received the award of 70,000 B. Assist. Prof. Dr. Nathawut Thanee and Assist. Prof. Dr. Sajeera Kupittayanant received the Best Practice Award at the international conference on "Toward Knowledge Network for the Economy, Society, Culture, Environment and Health for GMS and Asia-Pacific" for the research entitled "Prevalence of Ectoparasites and Parasites in Small Mammal at Sakaerat Environmental Research Station." After joining the School of Physics for a few days in October, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Santi Maensiri received a good news from the TRF that he was awarded the *TRF-CHE-Scopus Researcher Award* in Physical Sciences Category for the year 2010 with the cash prize of 150,000 B and plaque. Dr. Khanchai Khosonthongkee and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wipa Suginta received the *Distinction Awards* from the university in teaching and research categories, respectively.

Two faculties achieved prestigious academic appointments. Prof. Dr. Joewono Widjaja has been selected to be a Senior Member of the Optical Society of America and Assist. Prof. Dr. Rattikorn Yimnirun has been selected to be a Ferroelectric Committee Member of IEEE Ultrasonics, Ferroelectrics, and Frequency Control Society (IEEE-UFFC) and also a member of Executive Board of Asian Ferroelectric Association (AFA).

Our graduate students have long played important roles in reinforcing an excellence of research in our institute. Twenty one

students were awarded Ph. D. degrees, and twelve were awarded M. Sc. degrees.

At undergraduate level in sport science, the ten first batch students have all graduated. They all have found a good job, while the best of the batch continues to pursue his graduate study. Four of them were able to finish within four years and joined the commencement ceremony in October and one achieved 1st class honor.

This past year, three distinguished faculties, Prof. Dr. Prasart Suebka (Physics), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Malee Tangsathitkulchai (Chemistry), and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Santi Sakdarat (Chemistry) were retired. To make their retirement, a party organized by the institute was held at Korat Resort on 29th September. It was a well attended party of over 80 participants, including members and families of our institute and their formal colleagues. The gratitude was reflected in their honor at the party.

Prof. Dr. Prasart will continue to be with us to lead SUT to accelerate up the administrative S-curve. We are very pleased and congratulate him for receiving and achieving many prestigious awards and appointments over the past year. We are fortunate to have Dr. Malee to continue working with us on a contract basis. Dr. Santi will continue to supervise his graduate students until they complete their study. He also has a new adventure career in helping his family running their consulting business. We thank them for all what they have done for our institute and SUT, and wish them well and have great health for the future.

We welcome eight new faculties who have joined us this year, including Dr. Aphichat Ngernsoungnern (Anatomy), Assist. Prof. Dr. Duangkamol Maensiri (Biology), Dr. Rapee Gosalawit-Utke (Chemistry), Dr. Sayan Kannakom (Mathmatics), Dr. Michael F. Smith, Dr. Worawat Meewasana and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Santi Maensiri (Physics), and Dr. Dusdi Chanlikit (Remote Sensing).

Last but by no means least, a strategy plan which was promised to be done since 2009 has again not been completed. It has been half well done. It seems that we plan to have a meeting to do this once a

year at the end of September. We have satisfied the recommendation of the internal academic quality assurance committee. Many colleagues asked me over the past year about our institute strategic plan and my answer was *I have only one plan; if possible, I would like to recruit the best faculty for all schools if there is a position available.* We will try our best to satisfy the twin objectives of strengthening research and teaching of our institute.

Happy (somewhat belatedly) New Year!

Prapun Manyum



20th SUT Anniversary