PEN Honors Robert Pinsky for Lifetime Achievement

ROBERT PINSKY, the author of eight collections of poetry and one of the country’s leading advocates for the art, was honored last November with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the writers group PEN. The award, carrying a $1,000 prize, was presented at PEN Center USA in Beverly Hills, Calif., one of the group’s two American centers and the award giver.

The College of Arts & Sciences English professor, who was U.S. poet laureate an unprecedented three times, from 1997 to 2000, says the honor is special because PEN’s role is special. “Its mission includes work for freedom of expression and efforts on behalf of imprisoned or threatened writers around the world. That’s a particularly gratifying and, in a way, humbling aspect of this award.”

As poet laureate, Pinsky was a “barnstormer” (so described by the New York Times), contributing poems to mark special days on PBS’s NewsHour and exhorting all Americans to share their favorite poems with his Favorite Poem Project.

His awards include a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America, and the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. RB

ENG’s Hatice Altug Receives White House Honor

HATICE ALTUG, who led the development of a biosensor that uses tiny crystals to manipulate light to detect a virus, a protein, or a cancer cell in a drop of blood, was among a select group of scientists and engineers honored by President Obama last October at the White House.

The College of Engineering assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering and of materials science and engineering and 93 others received the 2011 Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, the United States government’s highest honor for science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers. In addition to being invited to the White House ceremony, awardees receive a research grant lasting up to five years.

Altug, who is part of a team of BU researchers awarded $4.8 million by the National Institutes of Health to advance the technology, was also named last fall one of Popular Science’s “Brilliant 10,” a group of researchers under the age of 40 who made transformational contributions to their fields during 2010.

Altug’s biosensor can quickly identify dangerous viruses such as Ebola and Marburg in resource-limited settings, which has profound implications for containing pandemics, as well as for assessing terrorist threats in places like airports.

The device is expected to have an immediate impact in Africa, where there are limited laboratory resources and a wide range of viral infections. ART JAHNKE

LAW Faculty Rated Best in Country

For the second year in a row, the School of Law has earned top ranking for best legal faculty in the country from the Princeton Review. LAW placed sixth in the country for “best classroom experience” as well. The Review is a highly regarded school-ranking and test-prep services company that ranks schools based on both data supplied by the schools and on student comments. Only schools that make their students available to the Review are ranked.

The company surveyed more than 18,000 students at the 167 law schools it studied, and their comments about teachers’ classroom competence and out-of-class accessibility were the basis of the faculty rankings. The best classroom experience ranking, according to the Review, was based on student responses “concerning their professors’ teaching abilities, the balance of theory and practical skills in the curricula, the level of tolerance for differing opinions in class discussion, and their assessments of classroom facilities.”

LAW’s faculty beat out peers at such schools as Yale, Stanford, Duke, Baylor, Northwestern, and Northeastern.

The rankings appear in the Review’s 2012 edition of The Best 167 Law Schools. RB