Birmingham alumni named among Times' Top 100 scientists

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Two prominent University of Birmingham scientific alumni have been named among the 100 most important people in British science and engineering, with one being voted the most powerful figure in the field today.

Nobel-prize winning geneticist Sir Paul Nurse, and chemist Dr Simon Campbell CBE FRS, who was part of the Viagra discovery team, feature in a list compiled by The Times newspaper to mark the first anniversary of its science magazine Eureka.

Sir Paul, who is described on the list as the 'Superman of Science', was unanimously voted into the Number One slot over Mark Walport, Director of the Wellcome Trust, and cosmologist Stephen Hawking. He graduated from Birmingham with a BSc in Biological Sciences in 1970 and was awarded a DSc Honorary Degree in 1998. In his distinguished career as a geneticist and cell biologist he is particularly credited for discovering genes that control cell division.

In 2001 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine with Tim Hunt and Leland Hartwell. Having spent the last seven years as president of Rockefeller University in New York, next month Sir Paul will become president of the Royal Society. He has also been named as director of the new UK Centre for Medical Research and Innovation (UKCMRI).

Dr Simon Campbell CBE FRS, former worldwide head of research at Pfizer and a past President of the Royal Society of Chemistry, was placed at Number 31 on the list. Having graduated from Birmingham with a BSc in chemistry in 1962, he went on to be awarded a PhD in 1965 and a DSc in 2004, also from the University.

Credited with discovering new medicines such as Cardura and Istin (Norvasc), in widespread use today, Dr Campbell is best known for spearheading the research programme at Pfizer in Sandwich that led to the erectile dysfunction drug Viagra. He was also a leading figure in the society's high-profile campaign to win increased Government funding for research into chemical science. Dr Campbell and his wife established the Simon and Jill Campbell Foundation in 2001 to provide financial help to talented scientific and mathematic students from UK state schools to study at Birmingham and Cambridge.

Dr Campbell said: 'As a researcher from industry, I am delighted to be included in the prestigious Times/Eureka Top 100 UK scientists, which contains numerous Nobel Laureates, and particularly to be in such a favourable position. I am also very pleased that Birmingham has made such a strong showing.

In his introduction to the list, Times Editor James Harding said the people included were 'pushing back the boundaries of scientific understanding, transforming our lives through innovation and changing our attitudes to science, each other and the world'.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor David Eastwood said he was delighted that two of Birmingham's world-renowned alumni had received such an accolade.

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