

Alumni Pride: Hopfinger honored as noted chemist

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In the world of computational chemistry and chemistry informatics, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumnus Anton “Tony” Hopfinger ’66, of Lake Forest, Ill., is known as a founding father.

For his noted work in both academia and industry, Hopfinger will be one of five alumni presented with UWO’s highest honor—the Distinguished Alumni Award—at a reception and dinner Oct. 12, during Homecoming 2012.

After graduating from UWO with bachelor’s degrees in both math and physics, Hopfinger went on to earn a doctorate in biophysical chemistry from Case Western Reserve University.

He currently serves as a distinguished research professor of pharmacy at the University of New Mexico, professor emeritus of medicinal chemistry and pharmacognosy at the University of Illinois and founder/chief technical officer/secretary of The Chem21 Group.

“I have been involved in teaching and research with the focus upon developing computer programs and databases to permit the design of new compounds for specific uses. The largest application of this technology has been in designing new drugs,” Hopfinger said.

His research has changed the face of computational chemistry, which involves applying chemical, mathematical and computing skills to solve chemical problems. He has been called the “father” of the multidimensional QSAR or quantitative structure-activity relationship.

“Overall, Tony has published more than 280 peer-reviewed papers, including four books on his novel research in computer-assisted molecular design, while presenting more than 385 invited lectures worldwide,” said Emilio Xavier Esposito, founder and chief science officer of exeResearch LLC. “Many of these contributions are key computational chemistry and chemical information methodologies that today are referred to as fundamentals.”

His impact on this field of study is extended further by the number of students he has trained. He has served as a thesis adviser to more than 50 doctoral students and provided training and experience to more than 70 postdoctoral associates.

Meanwhile, Hopfinger’s impact on industry also is noteworthy. Esposito said Hopfinger was an integral player in the production of “Apartame, one of the world’s leading artificial sweeteners; and Aricept, the blockbuster drug for treating early stage Alzheimer’s disease.”

In addition, Hopfinger’s research program laid the foundation for the production of Celebrex, a drug that treats inflammatory diseases.

Hopfinger credits UW Oshkosh for providing him with a solid educational foundation.

“If UWO would not have been in Oshkosh, it is highly likely, for economic reasons, that I would not have been able to go to college,” he said. “Throughout my career I have had to interact, and in some cases compete, with other students and professional colleagues who went to ‘big name’ universities. At no time did I ever feel that I was letdown by my training and education at UWO. UWO provides an outstanding educational product.”

For more information about the alumni awards dinner or Homecoming 2012, please contact the Alumni Relations office at (920) 424-3449 or email alumni@uwosh.edu for information.

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