

Professor Hong Di, Lincoln University Medal

2013 Recipient

Lincoln University's Professor of Soil and Environmental Science, Dr Hong Di, of the Department of Soil and Physical Sciences in the Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences, has given outstanding voluntary service to Lincoln University over some 20 years in the field of Chinese translation and interpreting, cultural advice, and representation of the University in negotiations and social engagement with Chinese visitors and delegations. He has also represented Lincoln University in China many times and undertaken the signing of documents and agreements.

All of this work has been voluntary, above and beyond the call of duty, and in addition to his professional academic work as a soil science teacher and researcher of distinction.

Examples of Professor Di's interpreting work are numerous and he has assisted successive Lincoln University chancellors and vice-chancellors with many visits of the highest order including that of Vice-Premier (later Premier) Zhu Rongji of China in 1992 through to Vice-Premier (now Premier) Li Keqiang in recent times. He has also assisted with visits by delegations from Chinese universities and scientific institutions, and by Chinese diplomats.

In addition to assisting at the negotiating table and in meeting room discussions, Professor Di has regularly and voluntarily hosted Chinese visitors to dinners in Christchurch, in his own time, following up the University's business negotiations with valuable and appreciated social interaction.

The quantity and quality of the time Professor Di voluntarily gives to Lincoln University's relationship with China is described by his Faculty Dean, Professor Bruce McKenzie, as "phenomenal" and all who have observed him in his translating/interpreting and visitor-assistance roles will concur with this.

Professor Di came to Lincoln University as a postgraduate student in 1986 and has been a staff member since 1995 after competing Master of Applied Science (Hons) and PhD degrees at the University and undertaking a research fellowship in Australia. He is originally from China and holds a BSc in Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry from the Agricultural University of Hebei.

He is an Honorary Professor of China's Academy of Sciences and an Honorary Professor at two Chinese universities. He is a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Science and of the NZ Society of Soil Science. In 2000 he was awarded the NZ Society of Soil Science's ML Leamy Prize, stamping him as the top soil scientist of the year. In 2005 he was appointed to a personal chair in soil and environmental sciences.

In 2008 he was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to agricultural research in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, notably through his research leading to a mitigation technology for nitrate leaching and nitrous oxide emissions from intensive dairying systems, work shared with Professor Keith Cameron OMZM.

For his commitment, passion and humility, Professor Di is a commendable recipient of the Lincoln University Medal.