RECIPIENTS OF CBIS 2026 AWARDS

(Awardee Biographies in Following Pages)

The Chinese Biological Investigators Society (CBIS) is pleased to announce the recipients of this year's Ray Wu Award, Young Investigator Award, and Teaching award.

Ray Wu Award was established by the society to honor the late Dr. Ray Wu, who not only had a distinguished scientific career but also nurtured a new generation of Chinese scientists in life sciences through his tireless effort in promoting scientific and educational exchanges between China and the United States. The Award recognizes CBIS members who have made fundamental discoveries in life sciences.

This year's award recipients are:

Dr. Yifan Cheng, University of California, San Francisco

Dr. Wei Yang, National Institutes of Health

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CBIS Young Investigator Award recognizes CBIS members who are in the early career stages but have already made remarkable contributions in their respective fields.

This year's award recipients are:

Dr. Chengqi Yi, Peking University

Dr. Zhao Zhang, Duke University

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CBIS Teaching Award recognizes a CBIS member who has contributed extraordinarily to education in biomedical sciences.

This year's award recipient is:

Dr. Jun-Lin Guan, University of Cincinnati

CBIS 2026 AWARDEE BIOGRAPHIES

Ray Wu Award

Yifan Cheng, Ph.D.

Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute
Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics
University of California San Francisco

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Dr. Yifan Cheng is currently an Investigator of Howard Hughes Medical Institute and a Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics at University of California San Francisco (UCSF). He received his Ph.D. degree in 1991 from Institute of Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). From 1991 to 1996, he continued his research in solid state physics and electron microscopy as a postdoctoral fellow at University of Oslo (NTNF Fellow) and Max-Planck-Institute of Metal Research (Alexander von Humboldt Fellow). In 1996, he changed his research direction to structural biology and received further training in cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) from Professors Kenneth Taylor at Florida State University and Yoshinori Fujiyoshi at Kyoto University. In 1999, he joined the laboratory of Thomas Walz to setup a cryo-EM operation at Harvard Medical School. He started his independent career in 2006, joining the faculty of UCSF and has stayed there ever since. He has been an HHMI Investigator since 2015. He is the recipient of the Christian B. Anfinsen Award from The Protein Society (2018), Anatrase Membrane Protein Award from Biophysical Society (2026) and David G. Rognlie Award from American Crystallography Association (2026), elected members of the American Academy of Arts and Science (2019) and National Academy of Sciences (2020).

His laboratory uses cryo-EM to study structures of biological macromolecules, particularly integral membrane proteins and dynamic complexes. In addition, development of cryo-EM methodology for structural biology is also a long-lasting interest of his laboratory. Previous works of his laboratory include developments of algorithms to correct electron beam-induced image motion and determination of the first atomic structure of TRPV1 by single particle cryo-EM, etc.

Ray Wu Award

Wei Yang, Ph.D.

Distinguished Investigator
National Institutes of Health, USA
Laboratory of Molecular Biology
National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive
and Kidney Diseases

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Wei Yang is a Distinguished Investigator at the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), where she has conducted research since 1995. Born in Shanghai, China, she began her undergraduate studies in biochemistry at Fudan University before transferring to the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where she received her B.A. degree in 1985. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1991 and completed postdoctoral training at Yale University in 1992.

Dr. Yang employs an integrated approach combining structural and biochemical methods to elucidate the molecular mechanisms that safeguard genome integrity and help prevent cancer. Her research focuses on DNA replication, repair, and recombination, with particular emphasis on ATP-mediated and Mg^{2+}-dependent molecular recognition, catalysis, and regulation.

She is the recipient of the Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin Award from The Protein Society (2011) and the Mildred Cohn Award in Biological Chemistry from the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (2017). Dr. Yang was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2013 and to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2015.

Young Investigator Award

Chengqi Yi, Ph.D.

Boya Professor, School of Life Sciences
Principle Investigator, Peking-Tsinghua Center for Life Sciences
Vice Director, Beijing Advanced Center of RNA Biology
Peking University, Beijing, China

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Chengqi Yi received his B.S. degree in chemistry in 2005 from University of Science and Technology of China and his Ph.D. degree in chemical biology (with Prof. Chuan He) in 2010 from the University of Chicago. He then did postdoctoral work in biochemistry & molecular biology (with Prof. Tao Pan) at the University of Chicago. Yi joined Peking University in 2012 as an assistant professor and was promoted to associate professor in 2017 and professor in 2019. He also holds a joint professorship in College of Chemistry and Molecular Engineering. He is a principle investigator in Peking-Tsinghua Center for Life Sciences, as well as in Synthetic and Functional Biomolecules Center. In 2023, Yi became a member and vice director of Beijing Advanced Center of RNA Biology.

Yi studies RNA modifications, particularly the non-m6A modifications. The Yi Lab has developed quantitative methods for sequencing pseudouridine (Ψ), N1-methyladenosine (m1A), N6-methyladenosine (m6A) and N6,2-O'-dimethyladenosine (m6Am). Yi has also characterized the modification enzymes and investigated their roles in development and diseases. By manipulating modifications, Yi developed RNA editing tools to suppress disease-causing nonsense and missense mutations, as well as to expand the genetic code at the RNA level.

For his work, Yi has received many awards and honors, including The Xplorer Prize, The VCANBIO Award for Biosciences and Medicine, The Chinese Chemical Society-Royal Society of Chemistry Young Chemist Award, OKeanos-CAPA Young Investigator Award, and The China Youth Science and Technology Award.

Young Investigator Award

Zhao ‘ZZ’ Zhang, Ph.D.

Associate Professor
Duke Science and Technology Scholar
Department of Pharmacology and Cancer Biology
Duke University School of Medicine

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Zhao ‘ZZ’ Zhang earned a B.S. in Biotechnology from Shandong Agricultural University (2005), an M.S. in Cell Biology from Beijing Normal University (2008), and a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Genetics from UMass Chan Medical School (2013). Skipped Postdoc training, he established his independent research group in 2014 as a Fellow at the Carnegie Institution for Science’s Department of Embryology (affiliated with Johns Hopkins University). In 2019, he was recruited to Duke University as an Assistant Professor and named as the inaugural Duke Science and Technology Scholar. He was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure in 2024.

Zhang’s research program focuses on mobile genetic elements, specifically transposons and extrachromosomal DNA (ecDNA). His work was instrumental in elucidating how animals suppress transposons in the germline via piRNAs. His laboratory developed innovative tools to track retrotransposon mobilization *in vivo*, revealing how these elements propagate during reproduction and how their activity can trigger protective immune responses. His lab demonstrated that retrotransposons hijack DNA repair pathways to generate ecDNA, facilitating their own replication. Recently, his research has expanded to understanding the role of ecDNA in driving cancer genomic evolution, with the goal of developing novel therapeutic modalities.

Zhang's contributions have been recognized with several prestigious honors, including the NIH Director’s Early Independence Award (2015), the Genetics Society of America’s Larry Sandler Memorial Award (2015), the Pew Biomedical Scholarship (2021), and the Sontag Distinguished Scientist Award (2025).

Teaching Award

Jun-Lin Guan, Ph.D.

Professor
College of Medicine
University of Cincinnati

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Dr. Jun-Lin Guan is a professor in the Department of Cancer Biology at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and served as Chair of the Department from 2013 until 2023. Dr. Guan received his education at the University of Science and Technology of China (BS 1982) and the University of California at San Diego (PhD 1987). After postdoctoral training at the Center for Cancer Research at MIT, Dr. Guan joined Cornell University faculty as an assistant professor in 1991 and rose through the ranks to professor in 2001. In 2006, Dr. Guan moved to the University of Michigan Medical School as a professor of internal medicine and of cell and developmental biology prior to joining the University of Cincinnati as Chair of the Department of Cancer Biology in 2013. In his 35-plus years of experience as a faculty member and active researcher, Dr. Guan has trained over 80 graduate students, research assistants, post-doctoral fellows, and junior faculty members. His research aims to understand the fundamental principles of cell signaling in the regulation of basic cellular functions in normal cell and developmental processes and to determine how the disruption of normal signaling pathways leads to diseases such as cancer. His laboratory has made seminal contributions in two areas of basic cancer research, namely, integrin signaling and autophagy in cancer development and progression. Dr. Guan was editor of Signaling Through Cell Adhesion Molecules (1999) and Cell Migration: Developmental Methods and Protocols (2005) and is the author of more than 270 scientific papers, with h-index of 91. He ranked #560 in the US (#953 in the world) in the 2026 Edition of Ranking of Best Scientists in the field of Biology and Biochemistry (based on D-index of 107, nearly 75,000 total citations of 278 publications). Dr. Guan served as PI on multiple NIH-funded grants with continuous funding since 1992. He has received several awards and honors, including the Kuo Mu-Rao Award (1982), Anna Fuller Cancer Fund fellowship (1987), SmithKline Beecham Award for Research Excellence at Cornell University (1993), Established Investigator Award from American Heart Association (1998), and League of Research Excellence at University of Michigan Medical School (2011), and was elected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2011).

Dr. Guan was a member of the first class of CUSBEA students who came to the US for doctoral studies from China in 1982. As such, he maintained close interactions with his fellow Chinese American colleagues and many generations of life scientists and students in China over the last 40-plus years. He has made numerous contributions in promoting interactions of Chinese/Chinese American scientists in the US/China and life sciences development in China. He played crucial roles in the formation of the Ray Wu Society (now CBIS) and served as its founding President 1998-2000. He contributed significantly to the founding and activities of the Ray Wu Memorial Fund since its beginning in 2008.