

# Nobel Prize Winning Chemist Sir Harold Kroto to Speak at Tulane

November 13, 2008 11:30 AM

Kathryn Hobgood  
[khobgood@tulane.edu](mailto:khobgood@tulane.edu)  
504-865-5229

Sir Harold Kroto, co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, will speak at Tulane University on "Science, Society and Sustainability." The lecture, which is free and open to the public, will be held in 102 Jones Hall on Monday, Nov. 24 at 4 p.m.

Kroto is the Francis Eppes Professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at Florida State University. Much of Kroto's illustrious career was spent at the University of Sussex, where he holds an emeritus professorship. It was at Sussex in the 1970s that Kroto launched his early research on carbon stars and carbon chains in interstellar space.

In the 1980s, collaborating with Richard Smalley and Robert Curl at Rice University in Texas, who were using laser spectroscopy in their own research, Kroto was able to simulate the carbon chemistry that occurs in the atmosphere of a carbon star. The experiment not only proved that carbon stars could produce chains, but also led to the discovery of the C<sub>60</sub> molecule "a soccer ball-shaped molecule made of 60 carbon atoms."

This discovery was pivotal -- for centuries people had believed that the element carbon only existed in two forms, as soft black graphite and the hard diamond. The existence of this new form of carbon with its unique structure (the C<sub>60</sub> molecule is also known as "buckminsterfullerene," named after Richard Buckminster Fuller, an architect known for the design of geodesic domes) has inspired intensive research in the field of nanotechnology. Scientists speculate about the possible uses of these incredibly strong, yet low-density molecules in electronics, medicine, and defense. Curl, Kroto and Smalley were awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1996.

Kroto, a Fellow of the Royal Society and a member of the Board of Scientific Governors at The Scripps Research Institute, is an ardent advocate for science education who devotes much of his time and energy to promoting careers in science among young people. In 1995 he jointly set up the Vega Science Trust to create high quality science films including lectures, interviews with Nobel Laureates, discussion programs, careers and teaching resources for TV and Internet Broadcast. Visit <http://www.vega.org.uk/> for more information.

Kroto's visit to Tulane is sponsored by the Chemistry Department and the School of Science and Engineering.