

# Leading UCT scientist wins R10m prize

STAFF WRITER

GEORGE ELLIS, one of UCT's leading A-rated scientists, has won the R10 million 2004 Templeton Prize, the world's largest annual monetary award given to an individual.

Ellis, 64, of UCT's Applied Mathematics Department, will eventually give the prize money away.

Initially he will give R5m to several non-profit organisations. The remaining R5m will go into a trust fund "which will support me in retirement and in my work for the rest of my life".

On his death the capital will be bequeathed to UCT for "a major project" which is still to be decided on.

Ellis, who was in New York yesterday for the announcement of the prize, said he was "simultaneously humbled and delighted". The award will be presented to him in May by the Duke of Edinburgh at Buckingham Palace.

A professor of applied mathematics, Ellis specialises in general relativity theory, an area first investigated by Albert Einstein. He is considered



**HUMBLED:** UCT's George Ellis will give his prize money away.

to be among a handful of the world's leading relativistic cosmologists, which include Stephen Hawking and Malcolm MacCallum.

His most recent investigations question whether there was a start to the universe and if there is only one

universe or many.

The award was founded by philanthropist Sir John Templeton, the financier who pioneered global investment strategies.

Since selling the Templeton Group in 1992 he has focused on fostering a broader understanding between theology and science. When he created the prize in 1972 he stipulated its money value always exceed the Nobel Prizes to underscore his belief that advances in spiritual discoveries could be quantifiably more significant than those honoured by the Nobel prizes.

Ellis will give a R1m grant each to the Basic Income Grant Campaign, the Association for Education Transformation and the Quaker organisation in South Africa. Smaller grants will go to Michael Oak Waldorf School, Cape Town Life Training Centre, Africar Summer Theory Institute, Imagine Cape Town project, a Free State agricultural school, the Hurdy Gurdy House for autistic children and "some individuals in need".

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