

## 2016 Carl Sagan Medal Goes to CAS Astronomer

**D**r. ZHENG Yongchun, an associate professor at the National Astronomical Observatories of CAS, was awarded the Carl Sagan Medal for Excellence in Public Communication in Planetary Science on May 10, 2016.

ZHENG was recognized for “his tireless promotion of planetary sciences to the Chinese public and for his explanations of Chinese science to the western world”, according to the American Astronomical Society (AAS).

With expertise in lunar geochemistry and geology, Dr. ZHENG mainly focuses on the research of lunar and planetary geology. He has a unique perspective on research fields such as the soil of Moon and Mars, utilization of planetary resources, planetary surface environment, the scientific goal and future development strategy of lunar and deep space exploration, etc.

ZHENG developed China’s first lunar regolith simulant. As an investigator on Chang’e-1 and Chang’e-2, he has obtained the microwave image of the complete moon with high-resolution by analyzing detection data obtained from lunar exploration programs, and has discovered more than 200 areas of lunar thermal anomalies.

According to an AAS press release, Dr. ZHENG has delivered scores of talks at planetariums and science museums. He is a columnist for the Xinhua News Agency and frequent contributor to print and online publications that have millions of readers, such as *China Science and Technology Daily*. He blogs several times each day on the sites of *China Science Daily* and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, with an emphasis on why an average person should care about planetary science and astronomy. His blog on ScienceNet has been visited more than 340,000 times, and he has written several books and book chapters for the general audience. His more than 100 popular articles have been published in *People’s Daily*, *Space Exploration*, *Military Digest*, *Newton Science World*,



and other publications. He often posts about NASA’s missions, including most recently about the New Horizons Pluto flyby and Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter studies of recurrent seasonal gullies on Mars.

Dr. Zheng earned his doctoral degree in geochemistry and cosmochemistry from the CAS Institute of Geochemistry in 2005. He currently serves as an associate professor at the National Astronomical Observatories. He is also an adjunct associate professor at the of China University of Science and Technology in Macau, China.

The Carl Sagan Medal for Excellence in Public Communication in Planetary Science is an award established by the Division for Planetary Sciences of AAS to recognize and honor outstanding communication by an active planetary scientist to the general public. It is given annually to scientists whose efforts have significantly contributed to a public understanding of, and enthusiasm for planetary science. Ever since it was founded in 1998, a total of 19 scientists have received the award.