The University of Malta has selected the first two alumni who are the recipients of a prestigious honour given in acknowledgement of distinction in their field, as well as leadership on a community, national or international level. The nominators for the Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award (OAAA) are graduates, staff, students and alumni of the University of Malta.

The Adjudicating Committee reached the decision, ratified by the University’s Council, to give the Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award to two nominees - general surgeon, Dr Maria Meilak who graduated in 1973 and satellite communications leader, Dr Hector Fenech, a graduate of 1978.

The Award will be offered on an annual basis. This year’s Awards were presented at a special event attended by the Rector, Professor Juanito Camilleri, members of the academic and administrative staff, past and present KSU Council Members and other alumni.

The presentation was followed by the launch of an exhibition entitled: Building Futures: the making of the Msida Campus. The exhibition was curated by Dr Raphael Vella as part of the Discover University initiative. The exhibition celebrated the Msida Campus, from the laying of the Foundation Stone to its future projects, through a collection of photographs recently acquired by the University of Malta.
Profile

Dr Hector Fenech

Dr Hector Fenech, a graduate of this Alma Mater, has shown outstanding qualities in the development of his career in the field of satellite communications. After graduating in 1978, Dr Fenech furthered his studies abroad, gaining his Ph.D. from the University of Bradford in 1987. Since then, he has risen to direct the future satellite programme of one of the largest communications satellite companies in the world. Dr Fenech is now an authority in his field and contributes regularly to academic and practical developments therein.

Despite having achieved both academic and professional success over many years beyond our shores, Dr Fenech always kept in contact with his Maltese colleagues. In 2004 he was instrumental in the setting up of a satellite company in Malta which now employs a growing number of Maltese engineers, graduates of this University, who are thus given exposure to the international telecommunications market. The University of Malta is proud to have Dr Hector Fenech amongst its alumni and to recognise his personal achievements and his desire, through his commercial acumen, to help up and coming Maltese engineers expand their horizons.

“I’m a firm believer that the limitations that we have, are the limitations that we either accept or we impose on ourselves.”

“There are people who say ‘The sky is the limit’. I’ll go further. I’ll say Space is the limit.”

Profile

Dr Maria Meilak

Dr Maria Meilak, a graduate of this Alma Mater, has offered her work voluntarily, quietly and unceasingly both in the Maltese community and abroad ever since she qualified as a medical doctor in 1973. Over the years, Dr Meilak has offered her medical services in both Central America and Africa. She continued her work even during periods of strife and civil war when wounded patients and women requiring emergency obstetrics turned to her for assistance. She is co-founder of a local voluntary organization and the current President of another whilst also assisting her local community within her parish. The University of Malta is proud to have Dr Maria Meilak amongst its alumni and to recognise her fortitude in the face of adversity, her generosity of spirit and her desire to use her profession and her talents in the service of others.

“At University, one learns about one’s chosen profession, but mostly one is prepared for a life of service to others. This is what keeps one happy.”

View images from the event on Facebook
A collection of black and white photographs representing different stages in the building of the Msida campus during the 1960s forms the basis of this exhibition, which tells the story of the growth of the university campus over a period of around half a century in hundreds of images. The original campus was designed in 1961 by British architects Norman and Dawbarn, one of whom (Graham Dawbarn) had been responsible for the iconic design of the well-known BBC Television Centre in London. Norman and Dawbarn conceived the Msida campus as a series of individual, modernist buildings spread around a large area known as Tal-Qroqq and connected by sheltered walkways and landscaped open spaces. The exterior of some of these early designs has remained virtually unchanged while others, such as the Administration Building and the Library, have been extensively modified over the years due to an increase in student and staff populations or structural problems.

During the last twenty-five years, the campus has grown considerably and now incorporates a range of new structures that did not form part of the original plans for the university, such as the Gateway Building and new faculty buildings. Changing requirements will result in further accretions in coming years and will undoubtedly also lead to lively debate about design and functionality, environmental impact and the preservation of specific buildings, architectural details and spaces. In order to reflect this sense of ongoing transformation and dialogue between past, present and future, the exhibition is divided into four parts. Three of these parts can be seen in the Common Room: a central multi-projection section that presents the collection of old photographs and an old film that show the building and inauguration of the campus in the 1960s, a video showing recent accretions and the present-day campus and yet another video that represents plans for the construction of new buildings in the coming years. Finally, on the outside, seven large cubes permit visitors to compare existing structures and spaces around campus with a selection of the old photographs.