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Umicore Scientific Award winners announced

Umicore has awarded its 2010 Umicore Scientific Award to Dr. Damien Debecker from the Institute of Condensed Matter and Nanoscience at the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) in Belgium. The prize was given for Damien's PhD work in the field of MoO_3-based heterogeneous catalysts for the metathesis of propylene[1]. Damien's entry was one of 33 entries submitted from all over Europe, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The award ceremony took place in Brussels on March 31st at which Damien received his prize - along with a cheque for € 10,000 - in front of an audience of researchers, academic staff and representatives from government and industry.

Umicore CEO Marc Grynberg commented: "I would like to congratulate Damien for his outstanding work and I hope that the award will serve as encouragement and motivation in his academic career and beyond. The field of his research is of real relevance in meeting some of the challenges the world is facing today."

The Umicore Scientific Award was launched in 2007 and aims to highlight the crucial role that fundamental academic research has to play in industry and society as a whole. The main Award is granted to a PhD graduate that, through his or her research, has significantly contributed to science in those fields that are crucial both for the growth of Umicore's business and the development of a sustainable society. These areas are: fine particle technology and applications; technology for metal-containing compounds; sustainable energy related topics; catalysis and finally, economic or societal issues linked to metal-containing compounds.

Four additional "Umicore Awards" for € 2,500 each were granted to David Moerman (University of Mons), Adrien Timmermans (University of Liège), Kurt Lejaeghere (University of Gent) and Sammy Verbruggen (Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) & University of Antwerp (UA)).

Umicore's partners, the Belgian funds for scientific research Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (FWO) and Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS), selected the laureates and ensured the scientific excellence of the awards.

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1 Solid metathesis catalysts are used by petro-chemical refineries to convert excess olefins into other products. Propylene is produced through the metathesis of ethene and butene. Molybdenum-based catalysts constitute the most promising solution to meet ambitious targets in terms of performance, stability and cost. Damien's work highlights new ways to prepare more active catalysts. Use of such catalysts in the refining process will enable more efficient use of hydrocarbons.

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Dr. Damien Debecker receiving his prize and cheque for € 10,000 from Umicore CTO Denis Goffaux.

Dr. Damien Debecker with his 2010 Umicore Scientific Award.

The winners of the Masters thesis awards with CTO Denis Goffaux.

All photos by Dimitri Lowette.
Hi-res pictures are available on request.

For more information

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Umicore profile

Umicore is a global materials technology group. It focuses on application areas where its expertise in materials science, chemistry and metallurgy makes a real difference. Its activities are centred on four business areas: Catalysis, Energy Materials, Performance Materials and Recycling. Each business area is divided into market-focused business units offering materials and solutions that are at the cutting edge of new technological developments and essential to everyday life.

Umicore generates the majority of its revenues and dedicates most of its R&D efforts to clean technologies, such as emission control catalysts, materials for rechargeable batteries and photovoltaics, fuel cells, and recycling. Umicore's overriding goal of sustainable value creation is based on an ambition to develop, produce and recycle materials in a way that fulfils its mission: materials for a better life.

The Umicore Group has industrial operations on all continents and serves a global customer base; it generated a turnover of € 9.7 billion (€ 2.0 billion excluding metal) in 2010 and currently employs some 14,400 people.