

Biologist elected to National Academy of Sciences

Robert Ricklefs, Curators' Professor of Biology at the University of Missouri–St Louis, has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences, and he's the only academic from Missouri on the 2009 list of new members.

Founded in 1863, the NAS has 2,100 members, of whom nearly 200 are Nobel Prize winners. Election to the academy is considered one of the highest honors for a scientist or engineer, and it recognizes a career of distinguished research.

"It is a great honor and responsibility," said Ricklefs, who has been at UM–St. Louis since 1995 and lives in University City, Mo. "I think it also is a testament to the high quality of faculty at the University of Missouri-St. Louis."

UM–St. Louis Chancellor Tom George said he's ecstatic about Ricklefs' achievement.

"This is clearly a tribute to his prowess as a scientist and academician, and reflects well on the overall caliber of our young institution," George said. "When I was a dean at the University at Buffalo, a colleague there had to win the Nobel Prize in chemistry before election to the NAS. Ricklefs is indeed part of a very select group."

Ricklefs has written or co-written four books, nearly 300 papers and more than 80 articles. He researches evolutionary biology and focuses on the diversification of birds, their growth and life histories. He also has worked on the evolution of plants and other organisms. Ricklefs is a past recipient of a Fellows' Award from the Academy of Science of St. Louis and President's Award for Research and Creativity from the University of Missouri System.