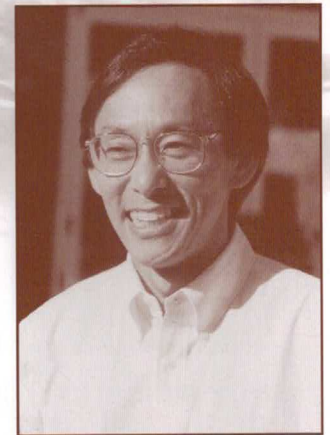




# National Engineers Week<sup>®</sup> 2004

## Distinguished Science and Technology Award

**Professor Steven Chu**  
*Department of Applied Physics  
Stanford University Stanford, CA*



Steven Chu was born in St. Louis in 1948, and hails from a family of accomplished scholars. Until high school, Steven saw school as a chore, and was not particularly inspired by his studies. His academic performance was solid but not outstanding, which led his father to suggest that he pursue more artistic (and less academically challenging) endeavors. Then a high school Physics teacher taught Steven that ideas could be cast into theory and tested by experiment. When this teacher encouraged ambitious laboratory projects, Steven rose to the challenge. He became fascinated by physics, and pursued his studies at the University of Rochester. The work of Richard Feynman sparked his interest in Physics even more, and he eventually decided to become an experimental physicist.

Steven Chu graduated from the University of Rochester in 1970 with an A.B. in Mathematics and a B.S. in Physics. He went on to do graduate work and received his Ph.D. in Physics from the University of California at Berkeley in 1976. While at Berkeley, Steven's interest in experimental physics grew under the guidance of Eugene Commins. He found that he relished the intellectual creativity inherent in experimental work. After two years of working as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Berkeley, he moved on to Bell Laboratories, taking a position as a member of their technical staff. Chu went on to become the head of the Quantum Electronics Research Department at AT&T Bell Laboratories from 1983-1987. In 1985, Chu had a breakthrough: he discovered a way to cool and trap atoms, enabling more accurate studies of their characteristics. This was an exhilarating time, but despite the cachet of the work and the creative environment at Bell Labs, he was drawn toward academia. Chu wanted to emulate Commins, his inspirational mentor, and decided to change his career path so that he could work with students.

