

Professor Kwong Hon Lau

Kwong Hon Lau, Professor of Physics, passed away on April 2, 2017, at St. Luke's Hospital in Houston, Texas, USA. He was 65.

Professor Lau got his undergraduate degree in Physics from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He then got his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in 1981, winning a Dissertation Research Excellence Award for his thesis, "Study of Inclusive Muon Production in e-e+ Annihilation in the Center of Mass Range 12 GeV to 31.6 GeV".

Professor Lau completed this work as a member of the PLUTO collaboration at the Positron-Electron Tandem Ring Accelerator (PETRA) at the DESY complex in Hamburg, Germany. Professor Lau was a Research Associate at SLAC where he was a member of the MAC detector collaboration. This detector, which was a large electromagnetic/hadronic calorimeter, produced several publications involving lepton production and decay, jet formation, and various particle production and resonances. Professor Lau and his collaborators were recognized by a "Special High Energy and Particle Physics Prize" from the European Physical Society for establishing the existence of the gluon in several independent and systematic ways.

In 1986, Professor Lau joined Professor Roy Weinstein's group at the University of Houston as an Assistant Professor. During that time, he was involved in research with the Large Volume Detector (LVD) at the Laboratori Nazionali del Gran Sasso (LNGS) in Assergi, Italy, and the SMC collaboration at CERN. The LVD work involved a search for neutrino bursts emitted from supernova. The SMC collaboration measured the spin of the quarks in a nucleon using a muon beam at CERN. Professor Lau's contribution to these experiments was the development and calibration of detector elements, contributing greatly to the success of the experiments.

In recent years, Professor Lau was a significant contributor to the Daya Bay neutrino experiment, which has made the world's most precise measurement of one of the neutrino mixing angles, called θ_{13} . The demonstration of neutrino oscillations by Daya Bay and other experiments proved that neutrinos have mass and revealed a new frontier beyond the standard model of particle physics. Professor Lau and his Daya Bay collaborators received the Breakthrough Prize in 2016 for this landmark work. At the time of his passing, Professor Lau was still an active collaborator on Daya Bay as well as Mu2e, an experiment at Fermilab designed to search for lepton flavor violation.

Professor Lau made significant contributions to the University of Houston's Department of Physics and was considered one of its leaders. He was at the University for 32 years and was an active participant in the affairs of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and the University of Houston as well. He was an excellent teacher and mentor to the many students he taught in physics classes over the years, as well as the Ph.D. students and postdocs he advised. Professor Lau was also a faculty mentor for the QUARKNET program and sponsored local high school teachers and students to work in his lab on projects in particle physics.

Professor Lau's students, collaborators, and colleagues will remember him for his gentle smile, lively conversations about physics, and his dedication to his work.

