From its inception well over half a century ago, the Faculty Research Lecturer Award has been the highest honor that the Academic Senate bestows. By acclamation, the Committee on the Faculty Research Lecturer is honored to place in nomination Chandra Varma, Distinguished Professor of Physics and Astronomy. We believe that the international acclaim for Professor Varma’s fundamental research contributions to theoretical Physics and Astronomy will add great luster to the award.

The letters from both Professor Varma’s department and external reviewers stress the imagination, creativity and quality of his research on many contributions to his field of research, but especially to what is known worldwide as the “Varma-flux-order” theory. One external reviewer noted that this theory shows Varma as not only a “cutting edge” thinker but, indeed, in the totality of his work, “ahead of the edge.” The significance and impact of this theoretical work is reflected in the judgement that once Varma’s “flux-order” theory is accepted by the scientific community, he will surely become be a strong candidate for a Nobel Prize in Physics and Astronomy.

In terms of global rankings, Professor Varma’s professional stature has been recognized by standard ranking schemes to be among the top 10-15 “dense matter theorists in the world.” His influence may further be measured by the fact that citations to his work number over 15,000 in Web of Science. One reviewer noted that Varma is one of the “most cited” figures in his field. He is the recipient of numerous awards.

Letters from scholars at some of the finest universities in the world also attest to Professor Varma’s prominence. Reviewers wrote from such international centers of research in theoretical physics as UCLA, Cambridge, Leiden and UCSB. He is lauded as making “seminal contributions” and one of the world’s “most cited” thinkers in his field. Others refer to him as “truly creative,” or as someone who has “made visible the profoundness and depth of the physics” in his area of speciality. He is also unanimously recognized as having achieved a truly major national and international reputation, so much so that most modern thinkers in his field are “still rooted in Varma’s thinking.”

The Committee would also like to go on record to assert that Varma especially embodies what we take to be the spirit of this award. By virtue of Professor Varma’s intellectual courage – often provoking controversy in the process, but always on the grounds of profound thinking – we believe he captures precisely the qualities UCR should wish to celebrate. We thus concur wholeheartedly in noting one external reviewer’s opinion that Varma’s work has “changed perspectives of whole fields” – and often at the risk of rubbing against the grain of conventional scientific opinion. It is precisely that quality of intellectual courage, together with the massive acclaim his work has attracted, that caught our collective ‘eye,’ and that we wish to reward.
For these reasons and many more, we, the undersigned members of the Senate Committee on Faculty Research Lecturer, unanimously and enthusiastically nominate, as Faculty Research Lecturer for 2010-11, Professor Chandra M. Varma.

Roger Atkinson (Department of Environmental Sciences)
Stanley Stewart (Department of English)
Christopher A. Reed (Department of Chemistry)
David Reznick (Department of Biology)
Ivan Strenski, Chair (Department of Religious Studies)