

# US PRESIDENTIAL AWARD

## FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE, MATHEMATICS, AND ENGINEERING MENTORING

Earlier this year Dr Tilak Ratnanather (1985) received the US Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring. This is the highest honour bestowed by the United States government for outstanding efforts in mentoring students for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). As an Associate Professor at Johns Hopkins University, Dr Ratnanather has devoted himself to recruiting and supporting an unprecedented number of deaf and hard-of-hearing (HOH) individuals in the United States and abroad into STEM fields.

Dr Ratnanather has a simple yet powerful objective for his mentoring programmes: to provide opportunities for deaf and HOH individuals who may not have otherwise been exposed to STEM, and to achieve this objective through extensive and involved networking, allowing his protégés to serve as mentors in turn.



*Dr Tilak Ratnanather and President Obama*

Dr Ratnanather's motivation to recruit and retain deaf and HOH individuals in STEM is built on the certainty that these individuals can contribute a unique perspective in this field, specifically in auditory-related sciences and medicine. Most of his deaf students have gone on to become doctors and world leaders in STEM.

In June 2015, Dr Ratnanather was invited to the White House with 13 other scientists and engineers to receive this highly prestigious award. At the ceremony President Obama said that Tilak and the other winners 'are helping to cultivate America's future scientists, engineers and mathematicians.' He stated, 'They open new worlds to their students and give them the encouragement they need to learn, discover and innovate. That's transforming those students' futures and our nation's future, too.' Dr Ratnanather also shared his advice for deaf young people. He said, 'The world is your oyster, so do not be afraid to reach out to others and to take risks.'

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*President Obama addressing winners of the US Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring*

Dr Ratnanather was born severely deaf. He went to two deaf schools before going to University College London and Jesus College, Oxford. He was the first profoundly deaf student to get a DPhil in Mathematical Sciences at the University of Oxford. Dr Ratnanather has now lived and worked in the US for 24 years, carrying out research into brain structures and supporting students with hearing loss.