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The first Onassis International Prize in Finance awarded to Professor Eugene Fama

Professor Eugene Fama from The University of Chicago Graduate School of Business was the first winner of the inaugural Onassis Prize in recognition of his work in finance academia. Professor Fama was recognised as the father of empirical finance, and was credited with being the inventor of the "efficient market hypothesis", possibly the most influential financial theory to have impacted both academics and practitioners alike.

The Onassis Prize, sponsored by the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation,is awarded by Cass Business School, London. The prize of $200,000, awarded every three years, recognises a lifetime contribution by a leading academic in each of the areas of shipping, trade and finance.

It identifies academic achievements that have previously not had a platform for worldwide recognition before and will hopefully, in time, receive the same prestige as the Nobel Prize in Economics. It was the first award bearing the Onassis name to be made abroad and it signifies the importance of the City of London as a global leader in shipping, trade and finance.

The "efficient market hypothesis" says that stock prices reflect all available information. As a result, investors should not be able to beat the market since there is no way for them to know something about a stock that isn't already reflected in the stock's price.

The judging panel for the award consisted of Mr Anthony S. Papadimitriou, President of the Onassis Public Benefit Foundation; Professor George Constantinides, University of Chicago; Professor Charles Goodhart, Professor Emeritus of London School of Economics; Professor Robert Merton, Harvard University (Nobel Laureate 1997); Professor Myron Scholes, Stanford University (Nobel Laureate 1997); and Professor Costas Grammenos, Founding Director of the Centre for Shipping, Trade and Finance at Cass Business School.

Professor Grammenos, the inspiration behind the prize, said: "Professor Fama is a most worthy winner of the inaugural Onassis Prize. His contribution to the area of empirical finance has changed the way of thinking about stock market fluctuations and his theories are known all over the world. Aristotle Onassis is a legend in shipping, trade and finance and I think he would have been very pleased with our selection of Professor Fama for this prize bearing his name."

Professor Fama said: "The selection committee for the Onassis Prize is made up of experts with an intimate knowledge of research in finance. It is, thus, a special honour to be the inaugural winner. I thank the committee for choosing me and I thank the Onassis Public Benefit Foundation for sponsoring the prize. In my view, finance is the most successful area of economics in terms of scientific and practical impact, and it deserves to have a special prize".

The Onassis Prize was formally presented at the equivalent of a state banquet at the Guildhall in the City of London, in April 2009. Professor Fama also gave a lecture at Cass Business School the day following the banquet.