

| HONOR

Prof. Khai-Ping Yao Honored for Transforming Students' Lives

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Prof. Yao's dedication to teaching has earned her five NTU Excellent Teaching Awards and one NTU Outstanding Teaching Award. In 2024, she received the National Science and Technology Council's Distinguished Research Award — the only recipient in the field of psychology nationwide. Her contributions to student guidance and campus affairs have also been recognized by the Ministry of Education with the Special Contribution Award for a Friendly Campus and the Outstanding Mentor Award for a Friendly Campus.

At National Taiwan University, students affectionately call her “Professor Mom.” This year, Khai-Ping Yao, Distinguished Professor in the Department of Psychology, has been named a recipient of Taiwan’s prestigious 2025 National Excellent Teacher Award (師鐸獎), honoring her exceptional contributions both in the classroom and in the personal lives of her students.

Prof. Yao’s influence extends well beyond her academic expertise. Drawing on her background as former Director of NTU’s Psychological Counseling Center and former Deputy Vice President of Student Affairs, she has become a steadfast

advocate for students with special mental health needs. Her office door is open to those who have stumbled — often due to conflicts with former advisors or other setbacks — and who arrive with their confidence shattered and their academic future uncertain.

More than 40 percent of the 30-plus graduate students she has supervised came to her under such circumstances. “I can’t help but get involved,” she says with a smile, describing her willingness to take on students others have given up on. Her first task is always to help them rebuild self-confidence before guiding them back into the rigors of research.

The process can be long and challenging, requiring extraordinary patience and commitment. Yet the results speak for themselves: her students not only complete their degrees, but many go on to earn academic awards. “Watching them come back from the lowest points of their lives to achieve success — that’s the greatest reward,” she says.

Upon receiving the award, Professor Yao credited her “partners along the way” — family members, students, colleagues, and the selection committee — for making the honor possible. “This recognition belongs to all of us,” she said, adding that the insights and inspiration her students have given her will remain with her forever.

For Yao, education has never been limited to the transfer of knowledge. “The real purpose of education is to awaken potential, to spark a love of learning, and to inspire the courage to explore,” she says — a philosophy she has spent her career putting into practice.