



Costas Synolakis - Biography

Academician Costas Synolakis was born in Greece and graduated from Athens College in 1975. He obtained all his degrees (BSc., MSc., and PhD) from the California Institute of Technology (Caltech). He became a professor at the University of Southern California (USC) in 1985.

In 1985 he was appointed Professor of Civil and Aerospace Engineering at the University of Southern California (U.S.C.) where, in 1996, he founded the USC Tsunami Center. Following his appointment as Professor of Natural Hazards and Environmental Hydraulics at the Technical University of Crete and his election in the National Research and Technology Council, he served as President of the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research. In 2019 he was elected Chairman of the Special Scientific Committee on Climate Change in Greece, where he serves pro bono. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Hellenic Space Center. In July 2020, he assumed the Office of President of Athens College.

His research interests are broad, He has authored a large number of publications, studies, and articles in scientific journals and has conducted multiple field missions around the world. His most recent work was just published in Nature, regarding the Tonga 2022 volcanic eruption and associated tsunami. He has received the Presidential Young Investigator Award in 1989 by U.S. President George Bush and the prestigious 2019 International Coastal Engineering Award by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). In 2020 he received the Hamaguchi Award, bestowed upon individuals or organizations that have made significant scientific or pragmatic contributions to the enhancement of coastal resilience against tsunami, storm surge and other coastal disasters. He is an internationally renowned pioneer in the field of tsunami research and other natural hazards. He has over 5000 ISI citations with ISI h-index 43 and Google Scholar h-index 57. He has edited five books, has over 220 conference presentations, and has helped produce tens documentaries on such acclaimed networks as DISCOVERY, BBC, National Geographic, History Channel and ZDF, primarily on tsunamis and similar natural disasters.

Synolakis has mentored over 50 PhD and MSc students. In 2016, he was elected to Academy of Athens, which is the Greek National Academy for letters, arts, law, medicine, engineering and the sciences. He is best known for his ground-breaking theories on wave physics and his insights on the complexity of major tsunamis.