**FDA RENEWS PARTNERSHIP WITH UMD ON FOOD SAFETY**

A University of Maryland center that forms an important part of the United States’ defense against food-borne illness received a five-year, $17 million award from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration this fall. It will allow the Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN), an FDA Center of Excellence founded in 1994, to continue to coordinate multi-institutional, interdisciplinary research projects to ensure a safe food supply, as well as work on capacity-building with international partners to prevent problems with imported food.

The institute is a vital source of data for the FDA and a link to the agriculture industry, which partners with JIFSAN, says MICKEY PARISH, senior science advisor in the FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, located in Greater College Park’s Discovery District.

The partnership “has allowed us to engage in continuous dialogue with academia and industry, facilitating the exchange of innovative ideas and knowledge for over 20 years,” he says. “This collaboration enhances the ability of the FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition staff to ensure public health.”

**NEW VP FOR RESEARCH WANTS TO HELP SCIENTISTS TRANSLATE WORK “FROM THE LABORATORY OUT”**

LAURIE LOCASCIO, the University of Maryland’s new vice president for research, started working here only in October, but she has been in UMD’s orbit for her entire 30-year career as a biomedical engineer and top administrator at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. NIST, partnering with UMD, entered the biosciences realm just as Locascio began working at the agency. After two decades in the lab, reinvigorating research in that area was her top priority when she entered management, eventually rising to principal deputy director and associate director of laboratory programs.

In an interview, Locascio talks about the draw of UMD, her vision for expanding the reach of its research programs and the importance of embracing new funding streams.

*Q*: How do you plan to increase the impact of UMD’s research enterprise?

**A**: I want to strengthen our ability to help the researchers translate their research from the laboratory out. We are very interested in growing our industry collaborations by exposing our research to potential industry partners. Also, we have strong relationships with certain federal agencies, but other federal agencies don’t know us as well. That’s a huge opportunity for us.

*Q*: How do public universities grow and broaden their funding at a time of political and fiscal uncertainty?

**A**: I have a very optimistic attitude about research funding in the United States. At the same time, we can be smart about diversification. That’s something we need to remember at all times—that while federal funding is critical for public institutions’ success nationwide, there are also new sources of funding, including private, coming from directions we weren’t previously looking.

*Q*: How does UMD continue its ascent as a top research institution?

**A**: I believe a shift in mindset that’s been talked about for a long time is now actually taking hold. Universities that have a big impact typically have a robust technology transfer process. That development on this campus, combined with President Loh’s vision of a Greater College Park, and the fact that we already have so many smart researchers doing cutting-edge work, means we’re increasingly creating a destination where talented people want to come.

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**NEW TIER 1 GRANTS SUPPORT DEVELOPING RESEARCH**

The Division of Research has announced the latest winners of 2017 Tier 1 grants—awards of up to $50,000 to help UMD faculty and research scientists pursue sponsored research, or support scholarship leading to major publications:

**GARY D. COLEMAN**, an associate professor of plant science and landscape architecture, is working on a project titled “Developing an Activation-Tapped Poplar Population for Functional Dissection of Nitrogen Homeostasis.”

**RONIT EISENBACH**, an associate professor of architecture, is exploring how design can improve underserved communities through “Library Lanterns: Illumination to Improve Literacy and Neighborhood Safety.”

**NICOLE LARONDE**, an associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry, is working on a project titled “The Molecular Mechanism and Architecture of the Methylosome.”

**SHIRLEY MICALlef**, an associate professor of plant science and landscape architecture, is investigating a pathogen’s adaptive traits in the project “Resistance Through Diversity: Understanding Salmonella Phenotypic Plasticity and Decision-Making in Response to Antimicrobials.”

**JEREMY MUNDAY**, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering, and **MARINA LEITE**, assistant professor of materials science and engineering, are working on “A Novel Approach to Solar Energy Using the Plasmaelectic Effect.”

**GAREGOH PAPAHO**, Monroe Martin Professor of chemistry and biochemistry, is studying the “Molecular Underpinnings of Long-Term Memory Formation: Unique Computer Modeling of Dendritic Spine Structure and Dynamics.”

**JENNIFER ROBERTS**, assistant professor of kinesiology, is working on the “Purple Line Outcomes on Transportation Study: An Examination of Pre-Purple Line Active Transportation Behaviors and Attitudes Among Prince George’s County Residents.”

Tier 1 grant application deadlines are in June and December. For information, visit go.umd.edu/facultyincentive.
FACEBOOK WAS FORCED TO ISSUE a major “mea culpa” in 2014 after it intentionally slanted the feeds of more than 600,000 users to see if social media could influence their emotional states, teaming up with academic researchers to analyze the results. Overarching, still-unanswered ethical questions that the Facebook study raised are the subject of a four-year, UMD-led study funded by a $3 million award from the National Science Foundation. KATIE SHILTON, associate professor of information studies, is overseeing the study with collaborators who include JESSICA VITAK, an assistant professor of information studies, and researchers from six other institutions. “Whether mobile phone apps, website search engines, wearable technology or social platforms, consumer information has become highly trackable and available," Shilton says. "This has resulted in an ethically questionable free-for-all in research and marketing.” The project, “Pervasive Data Ethics for Computational Research,” will examine issues including user consent, risk assessment and regulations. The team will issue a set of guidelines for researchers working at a time when big data analytics is developing increasingly powerful tools to harvest information out of the chaos of old social media posts, government records and even stats from your latest run. “The line between academic and corporate research has become blurry, so we think our guidelines will be useful for the corporate world as well," she says.