UMD-UMB Seed Grants Focus on Fighting Cancer and Parkinson’s

Researchers from the University of Maryland, College Park and the University of Maryland, Baltimore will combine efforts to develop lifesaving treatments and methods to help cancer and Parkinson’s disease patients, thanks to the latest round of awards from the Joint Research and Innovation Seed Grant Program.

It’s part of the MPowering the State initiative to promote collaboration between the universities and create synergy in areas including bioinformatics, personalized medicine and public health informatics. “Our educators and researchers have developed deep collaborations focused on improving the quality of life and health in the state of Maryland,” Provost Mary Ann Rankin says. “The projects funded through this MPower program serve as catalysts for major research initiatives that could lead to lifesaving discoveries and groundbreaking health care innovations.”

The program has distributed $11.5 million to 132 researchers since its launch in 2008. Projects funded by the 2015 MPower program serve as catalysts for major research initiatives that could lead to lifesaving discoveries and groundbreaking health care innovations.”

Three partnerships are active so far:

São Paulo Research Foundation: UMD signed an agreement with the foundation this year to facilitate scientific and technological collaboration between researchers from UMD and a university in São Paulo, Brazil, by funding joint research workshops.

Tel Aviv University: Two teams of faculty and graduate students from UMD and Tel Aviv University were awarded $15,000 for joint research workshops in 2015, with a 2016 round coming up.

University of Ulster: UMD and the University of Ulster earlier this year announced a new program to support joint scientific research by funding joint research workshops in 2016.

For more information or to view calls for proposals, visit http://go.umd.edu/0s5.

International Workshops in Your Future?

A new funding program will help UMD researchers connect with collaborators from international partner universities, bringing together scientists and scholars with diverse backgrounds and expertise to address important issues.

The Joint Research Workshops program will grow UMD’s international research portfolio and raise the university’s profile.

“Our strong emphasis on joint international research collaborations will maximize our global impact and expand our partners’ network, both essential strategic components for our model 21st century research university,” says Vice President and Chief Research Officer Patrick O’Shea.

UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE OF FEDERAL RELATIONS

Budget Bill Heads off Sequestration Cuts

The Bipartisan Budget Act that President Obama signed in November provides relief from the sequester-level discretionary spending caps and avoids the harmful effects of a year-long continuing resolution (CR). The CR would have held funding for education, research and other priorities stagnant or decreased federal budget uncertainty. Instead, the new budget act boosts both defense and non-defense spending by $25 billion each in 2016 and $15 billion each in 2017. The next step is for Congress to enact appropriations bills this year and next to increase federal investments in the vital areas of higher education and scientific research, helping to keep the United States at the forefront of global research and innovation.

Lock to the Federal Corner for information on higher education and the federal government. If you have a specific topic you’d like to see discussed, contact Ross Stern, director of state government relations, at stern@umd.edu.
NSF ADVANCE Award Targets Workload Equity, Transparency

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has funded a three-year experiment to analyze faculty workload in STEM and social sciences departments throughout the University of Maryland System to determine if work is being distributed fairly.

KerryAnn O’Meara, primary investigator for the grant, says NSF-funded research shows women and underrepresented minorities often do more campus work and advising than other faculty of similar discipline and rank. As a result, they are unhappy with the amount of time left for research.

Workload dissatisfaction is one of the main reasons for faculty departures, says O’Meara, a professor of higher education and director of UMD’s ADVANCE program, which supports research and scholarship by women at the university.

The project will establish computerized “dashboards” that faculty and administrators can view to monitor balances of teaching, service and research and potentially use to distribute work equitably. UMD’s grant also funds similar research in the Massachusetts and North Carolina state systems.

Workload transparency brings a wide range of benefits, from greater equity within departments to a better idea of what the universities contribute to their states, O’Meara says.

“This is a way to increase fairness, so women and underrepresented faculty aren’t doing more service than everybody else,” she says. “It also allows us to create efficiencies by examining total activity to see if there are things we don’t need to be doing. And it gives us a way to describe to the public and legislators what we’re doing as a university and why.”

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International Joint Research Opportunities on the Rise
Inaugural Research Communicator Impact Award Winners Honored

GREGORY BAECHER, a professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, received the 2015 GEOSNet Distinguished Award for LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT. He was recognized for substantial contributions to the geotechnical risk and reliability community in research, education and leadership.

STEVE FETTER, a professor in the School of Public Policy, has joined the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy as the principal assistant director for national security and international affairs. He served as the office’s assistant director at large from 2009-12. Fetter is on leave through January 2017.

SACOBY WILSON, assistant professor in the School of Public Health, received the Damu Smith Environmental Achievement Award from the American Public Health Association. Sacoby, an expert in exposure science and air pollution monitoring, was honored for his leadership in environmental and social justice.

We introduce you to new faculty and research scientists in the Maryland research community.

Bobby Benedetto is an assistant professor in the Department of Women’s Studies. He researches and teaches at the intersections of queer theory, postcolonial theory and urban anthropology.

Kathleen Stewart is an associate professor in the Department of Geographical Sciences. She works in the area of geographic information science with a particular interest in temporal GIS.

Nathan Swenson is an associate professor in the Department of Biology. Swenson conducts integrative ecology and evolution research with a focus on the tropics.

Huan Xu is an assistant professor of aerospace engineering with a joint appointment in the Institute for Systems Research. She researches control and dynamical systems and formal methods.