July 19, 2012

ANDREI KUTATELADZE NAMED DEAN

Andrei Kutateladze, Ph.D has been appointed as the Dean of the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (NSM), replacing Dr. Alayne Parson who has retired. Dr. Kutateladze is an internationally recognized scientist whose research as a chemistry professor focuses on the development of new analytical methods for drug design and discovery. He has received numerous honors and awards for his research accomplishments, most notably a National Science Foundation CAREER Award, DU's University Distinguished Scholar award and being named a John Evans Professor at DU. Dr. Kutateladze graduated from Moscow State University and did his postdoctoral work at the University of Denver, (1990-92) and the University of Wisconsin, (1992-95) before returning and joining the faculty at DU in 1995. He has mentored more than 44 undergraduate, masters, PhD and postdoctoral students at DU. Dr. Parson was appointed Dean in 2007 and since then has overseen the recruitment of numerous outstanding young faculty and considerable growth of NSM’s research activities. A mathematician, she will teach a course in mathematics for undergraduates following her official retirement at the end of June. We thank her for her strong leadership these past 5 years and wish her good health and the opportunity to do all of the things she has put on the “back burner” over the years.

KNOEBEL INSTITUTE FOR LONGEVITY AND HEALTH

The Center on Aging officially changed its name to the Knoebel Institute for Longevity and Health and has begun to implement its programs. This Spring, the Institute requested research applications for “Pilot and Feasibility (P & F) studies relating to aging or longevity”. Twelve grant applications were submitted; the following five were funded:

1. Leslie Hasche (Graduate School of Social Work) and Anne DePrince (Department of Psychology) “Elder Maltreatment Risk and Consequences”
2. Michele Knowles (Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry) “Characterizing C1q Binding to Apoptotic Cell Mimics”
4. Dan Linseman, (Department of Biological Sciences and ERI) “Role of Distinct Species in Mitochondria Dysfunction associated with Alzheimer’s Disease”
5. Jun Zhang and Bradley Davidson (Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering) “A Motion Capture Based Surveillance System for Elderly Fall Recognition, Detection and Early Warning”

The main purpose of these grants is to generate data which can be used to support grant applications to external funding organizations. The $250,000 used to support these grants was made possible by Provost Kvistad.

ERI FACULTY RECEIVE NUMEROUS RESEARCH GRANTS

ERI affiliated scientists received numerous research grants and have published over 30 manuscripts in the peer-reviewed scientific literature in 2011 and 2012. These are on a wide range of important scientific topics ranging from studies on Lou Gehrig’s disease, Alzheimer’s disease, Down syndrome, and inborn errors of metabolism to fundamental studies characterizing protein structure and function and hormone action. Nine undergraduate students from ERI affiliated laboratories graduated with distinction and/or Honors and have produced undergraduate research theses to earn this designation. One of Dr. Patterson’s students, Kyleen Luhrs (see photo), was awarded the 2012 Barrett Distinguished Senior Thesis Award in Biological Sciences.

Dr. Scott Pegan, Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry, is ERI’s newest affiliated faculty member. Dr. Pegan’s on-going research is centered on discovering new classes of drug
candidates for use in antiviral, antibiotic, and cancer therapies. He uses advanced structural biology, biophysical and enzymatic techniques as well as the latest in high-throughput screening methodology. His goal is to discover pharmaceuticals that are not only disease specific, but can also be developed for broad based applications. He is collaborating with Drs. Ghosh and Patterson on the study of ADSL deficiency, an untreatable inborn error of metabolism often accompanied by autistic features. Dr. Pegan has been notified by the National Institute of Health that he will be awarded a two-year grant and usage of the Scripps Molecular Screening Center facilities for his work.

Dr. Kingshuk Ghosh has been awarded two prestigious and highly competitive grants. The first is a Faculty Early Career Award from the National Science Foundation. This award is given in support of a junior faculty member who exemplifies the role of a teacher-scholar through outstanding research, excellent teaching and the integration of education and research. The second is a Cottrell Scholar Award for Science and Teaching from the Research Corporation for Science Advancement (RCSA). RCSA was founded in 1912 and is the second-oldest foundation in the United States (after the Carnegie Corporation) and the oldest foundation devoted wholly to science.

Dr. Scott Barbee has been granted a Discovery Award from the Department of Defense for his work on Fragile X syndrome, the most common inherited form of developmental disability in humans. Dr. Barbee’s research was recently featured in ResearchMedia Ltd., one of Europe’s leading portals for dissemination of groundbreaking science. Dr. Martin Margittai has been awarded a grant from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke entitled “Linking Tau Filament Structure to Phenotypic Diversity in Human Tauopathies”. In the past few years, new observations in several laboratories around the world (including Dr. Margittai’s) have revealed that tau filaments (the pathological hallmark of >20 neurodegenerative diseases including Alzheimer’s disease and progressive supranuclear palsy) can have different molecular shapes and can spread throughout the brain from cell to cell. It is expected that the research will provide a better understanding of the pathogenesis of Alzheimer’s disease and other neurodegenerative diseases and will lead to new therapeutic strategies to combat these fatal diseases.

Dr. David Patterson has received a grant from the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation for accelerated studies on an untreatable inborn error of metabolism associated with profound developmental delay often with autistic features and a grant from the Alvin Itkin Foundation in support of his work on Down syndrome. Dr. Patterson’s graduate student Nathan Duval has been accepted to the Molecular Biology of Aging program for this summer. This is an extremely competitive course funded by the Ellison Medical Foundation.

THANK YOU
As always, we greatly appreciate your support of our mission and research. The exciting research described above would not have been possible without your support and commitment to ERI. Contributions make it possible to do pilot and feasibility studies which generate data for grant submissions to large funding agencies and organizations. THANK YOU!

Cordially:

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