CSHL New York

The Center for Therapeutics Research (CTR) project is a new $75 million initiative to apply CSHL’s biomedical expertise toward advancing therapeutics for genetic diseases. New York State is contributing $25 million for construction and equipment funds to modernize the existing Demerec Laboratory, which was built in 1953 and has housed the laboratories of four of the Lab’s eight Nobel Prize winners. “Thank you to all of our friends and supporters on Long Island who made the New York State funding for this project a reality,” said President Stillman. “We owe much to the leadership of Senator Majority Leader John J. Flanagan, and our New York State Senator Carl Marcellino. And we are proud to work with our peer research institutions to champion the critical role of the biomedical sector in the Long Island economy.”

CSHL leads two international teams

Two CSHL investigators are among 25 international teams that have won 2016 Human Frontier Science Program (HFSRP) Research Program Grants: Associate Professor Bo Li, a neuroscientist, and Assistant Professor Irina Lee, a genomics expert and cancer researcher. The HFSP grant program supports innovative, cutting-edge research that is expected to open new fields of investigation. Dr. Li’s project is “Single cell resolution imaging and optogenetics in the amygdala fear circuits in behaving animals.” Joining Li in this collaborative research are teams from University Paris Descartes, CNRS, France; MIT; and The Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Lee’s project is: “Complete cell lineage trees inferred by in situ genotyping in behaving animals.” Joining Li in this collaborative research are teams from institut de Génomique Fonctionnelle de Lyon, France; and University College, London.

Plant biology program sees the light

Welcome Ullas Pedmale, Assistant Professor, from a post-doctoral fellowship at the Salk Institute of Biological Sciences. With a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia, he has been exploring changes in plant architecture in response to variations in light quality. Plants don’t have specific organs that see or hear, but they modify their development according to external signals. At CSHL, his lab studies how the environment of a plant modulates its development. “Understanding environmental control of growth will have far-reaching implications for agriculture, energy production, and other human activities,” Pedmale explains.

Women’s Partnership lauds CSHL alumna

“Evelyn Witkin was a graduate student here in 1944, and last year won the Lasker Prize, which is the most prestigious medical research prize in the United States, for work that she started at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory all those years ago,” explained CSHL President Bruce Stillman as he introduced her as this year’s Women’s Partnership Science lecturer. “I really can’t overstate the great good fortune I had of spending those years at Cold Spring Harbor, and being witness to, and in a small way a participant in, the birth of molecular biology,” said Witkin. Since 2002, the event has raised $1.7 million. Thanks to this year’s co-chairs: E. Ainslie, L. Bahnik, M. Celestino, S. Cohen, K. Perkin-Division, T. A. Delloico, C. Giro, A. Lush, A. Lister, J. Mercer, M. Nagel, J. C. Nicholls, L. Parent, P. Petersen, L. Piazza, W. Poullicco, Dr. M. Simons, H. Greir Smith, C. Stebbins, S. Tietel, and M. van de Souse, M.D. Joining Witkin in this photo are CSHL postdoctoral fellows Olivia Mendivil Ramos, Sarah Diesmeyer, and graduate student Britanny Cazakoff.

Pershing Square Sohn Prize for next-gen cancer therapies

Associate Professor Chris Vakoc, M.D., Ph.D., was awarded the third annual Pershing Square Sohn Prize for Young Investigators in Cancer Research to help fund his explorative and high-risk/high-reward research. A finalist in last year’s prize, Vakoc’s research employs a novel CRISPR technique that can reveal individual protein domains that sustain cancer cells. His lab is now deploying this technology in a diverse array of human cancers to reveal therapeutic opportunities and basic mechanisms of cancer gene control. “The Pershing Square Sohn Prize Winners are among the most talented and innovative scientists in cancer research,” said Olivia Trosman Flatto, President of the Pershing Square Foundation. “Dr. Vakoc’s research has great promise for guiding the development of next-generation cancer therapies.”

Joining a legacy of young leaders

Assistant Professor Camila dos Santos is a 2016 Rita Allen Foundation Scholar, an award that recognizes young leaders in biomedical science whose research holds great promise for revealing new pathways to advance human health. Camila joins a distinguished list of CSHL faculty whose early career research was also supported by the foundation, including Bruce Stillman, David Toveyson, Doug Featon and Greg Hannon. In recent years, CSHL winners have included: Lloyd Trotman, Chris Hammill, and Molly Hamill. Dva Santos’ lab is studying breast development in mouse models and has found dramatic differences between first and second pregnancies, which appear to be mediated by epigenetic mechanisms—molecular changes that affect gene expression without altering DNA sequences. This award will allow the dos Santos lab to assess the relevance of these epigenetic phenomena for breast cancer risk, which is at least 30 percent lower in women who have a full-term pregnancy before the age of 25. A long-term goal is to “propose a prophylactic strategy” so that even women who do not have an early pregnancy can “still leverage the preventive effect that the pregnancy signals are bringing to decrease the risk of breast cancer,” dos Santos says.

New on Board

The CSHL Board of Trustees elected Douglas Schloss as its newest member. Since 1994, Mr. Schloss has been CEO & Managing Member of Redfox Management. He previously managed arbitrage and investment activities at Marcus Schloss & Co. Mr. Schloss is a graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Business School. A 1973 graduate of St. Paul’s School, he served as the President of the Board of Trustees of the college preparatory school from 2004 to 2014. “We welcome Doug’s unique combination of business expertise and leadership experience in the non-profit education sector,” said CSHL Chairman Jamie C. Nicholls.