NIH grants $19 million to Medical School

By Caroline Arbanas

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded School of Medicine scientists four grants totaling $19 million to explore the trillions of microbes that inhabit the human body and to determine how they contribute to good health and disease.

The grants are part of the Human Microbiome Project, an ambitious effort to catalog the bacteria, viruses, fungi and other microorganisms that naturally coexist in or on the body.

On June 13, the NIH announced $425 million grant to 12 U.S. institutions that expand the scope of the microbiome project.

In 2010, the NIH released a report on the microbiome project.

The project received three other large-scale DNA sequencing centers.

The center will be led by the VLBA and its impressive spatial resolution radio observations.

The project is one of only about 25 sources that make up the very-high-energy gamma-ray astronomy.

The project is a joint collaboration with the three major gamma-ray observatories VERITAS, H.E.S.S. and MAGIC.

The project is involved in these observations.

The project is a collaborative study, titled “Radio Imaging of the Very-High-Energy Gamma-Ray Emission Region in the Central Engine of a Radio Galaxy.”

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In addition to VERITAS and the VLBA, the Very High Energy Stereoscopic System (H.E.S.S.) and the Major Atmospheric Gamma-Ray Imaging Cherenkov (MAGIC) gamma-ray observatories were involved in these observations.

“We had scheduled gamma-ray observations of M 87 in a close cooperative effort with the three major gamma-ray observatories VERITAS, H.E.S.S. and MAGIC, and we were lucky that an extraordinary gamma-ray flare happened just when the source was observed with the VLBA and its impressive spatial resolving power,” Beilicke said.

“Continuously combining the high-resolution radio observations with the VHE gamma-ray observations allowed us to locate the site of the gamma-ray production,” said R. Craig Walker, Ph.D., staff scientist at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Socorro, N.M.

M 87 is located at a distance of 50 million light years from earth in the Virgo cluster of galaxies. The black hole is in the center of M 87 and is 6 billion times more massive than the Sun.

The size of a black hole is given by the Schwarzschild radius. Everything — matter or radiation — that goes beyond that radius will be swallowed by it. The Schwarzschild radius of the supermassive black hole in M 87 is comparable to the radius of our solar system.

In the case of some supermassive black holes — as in M 87 — the jets originating and approaching the black hole powers highly relativistic outflows, called jets.

The jets themselves are located outside our galaxy known to emit VHE gamma-rays.

Beilicke said.

Weinstock, PhD, professor of genetics and associate director of the Genome Center, will lead the effort to decode the DNA of other microorganisms in collaboration with other microorganisms in three other large-scale DNA sequencing centers.

This information will be used to catalog the microbes found in samples from healthy human volunteers to find out which microbes live in various ecological niches of the body.

“We can't really understand human health and disease without understanding the massive community of microorganisms we carry around with us,” Weinstock said. “This effort will tell us which microbes are in certain areas of the body and what they are doing there. Ultimately, this information will change how we think about and treat many illnesses.”

Many scientists consider humans as superorganisms, a synergistic community of both human and bacterial cells that is more than the sum of its parts. The microbial cells in the human body are major players. They outnumber human cells by at least 10 to 1.

Moreover, our bodies carry more than 100 times as many microbial genes as human genes. These microbes contribute essential functions that humans have either lost or never been able to perform on their own, such as synthesizing certain vitamins, digesting complex sugars or helping the body to ward off harmful disease-causing microorganisms.

WUSTL researchers also received $10 million for three pilot demonstration projects that investigate the link between changes in microbial communities and certain diseases. These one-year projects involve sampling the microbiomes of both healthy and ill volunteers. By comparing differences in microbial communities between the two groups, researchers hope to see the connections.

See Grant, Page 2

Village East apartments certified LEED Silver

First ‘green’ residence hall on Danforth Campus

By Jessica Daces

The Village East student apartment building has received a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver rating from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).

The LEED rating system is a third-party certification program and a nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of environmentally friendly buildings.

The Village East is the first LEED-certified residence hall and third LEED-certified building on the Danforth Campus. The Danforth University Center earned a LEED Gold rating in 2008, and the Earth & Planetary Sciences Building was LEED-certified in 2005.

“I am so pleased that Village East is our first green residential facility for undergraduates,” said Henry S. Webber, executive vice chancellor for administration.

“This beautiful facility now enables us to more adequately meet the increasing demand by juniors and seniors for apartment-style accommodations on the Danforth Campus.”

Justin X. Carroll, associate vice chancellor for student affairs and dean of students. "Providing state-of-the-art facilities that are more energy-efficient and more cost-effective has been a priority for our student housing redevelopment program."

See Village East, Page 6

McDonnell scientists help find gamma rays from black hole

An international collaboration of 390 scientists reports the discovery of an outburst of very-high-energy (VHE) gamma radiation from the giant radio galaxy M87 (M 87), accompanied by a strong rise of the radio flux measured from the direct vicinity of its supermassive black hole.

The combined results give first experimental evidence that particles are accelerated to extremely high energies of tera electron volts (one electron volt is the energy an electron or proton gains when it is accelerated by one volt) in the immediate vicinity of a supermassive black hole and then emit the observed gamma rays. The gamma rays have energies a trillion times higher than the energy of visible light.

The large collaborative effort involved three arrays of 12-meter to 17-meter telescopes that detect very-high-energy gamma rays and the Very Long Baseline Array (VLBA) that detects radio waves with the highest spatial precision.

Washington University in St. Louis (WUSTL) scientists Matthias Beilicke, Ph.D., a postdoctoral research associate in physics in Arts & Sciences, and Heinz Krawczynski, Ph.D., associate professor of physics, working with the Very Energetic Radiation Imaging Telescope Array System (VERITAS), coordinated this cross-institutional, international VERITAS collaboration, the results of which appeared in the July 2 Science Express, the advance online publication of the journal Science.

Jackson H. Buckley, Ph.D., professor of physics and a member of the VERITAS collaboration and work close with Krawczynski on the VERITAS project. The WUSTL group, which Buckley leads, has played a key role in a number of publications describing discoveries made by the newly commissioned VERITAS experiment, including the last collaborative study, titled “Radio Imaging of the Very-High-Energy Gamma-Ray Emission Region in the Central Engine of a Radio Galaxy.”

In addition to VERITAS and the VLBA, the Very High Energy Stereoscopic System (H.E.S.S.) and the Major Atmospheric Gamma-Ray Imaging Cherenkov (MAGIC) gamma-ray observatories were involved in these observations.

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The jets themselves are located outside our galaxy known to emit VHE gamma-rays.

Beilicke said.
The following employees were recognized for 15 years of service to the School of Medicine:

School launches energy-awareness drive

Crowder named Brown Professor in Anesthesiology

Crowder graduated from Washington University in 1936 with a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in education. In 1952, he received a M.D., and in honor of Alex S. Brown, M.D., who completed his anesthesiology residency at St. Louis University in 1929, the Brown Professorship was established in his honor.

The Brown professorship has been very important to the medical school and the University, said Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton. "Mike Crowder is one of the leading physician-scientists in the world. His research has been very important to the medical school and to the University. He is clearly a leader in his field."

"Mike Crowder is a leading physician-scientist and a pioneer of anesthesiology. He is clearly a leader in his field."

Whelan, Zhang take new roles at School of Medicine

Aharon J. Whelan, M.D., has been named senior associate dean for education, and Jing Zhang, J.D., has been named assistant dean for clinical trials. Both appointments were effective July 1.

Whelan, a professor in the Department of Internal Medicine, is the director of the Center for Clinical Studies and the Medical School's Clinical Simulation Laboratory. Zhang, an assistant professor of radiology, of neurology and of neurobiology, serves as director of the Practice of Medicine, a systematic, evidence-based approach to patient care that has been implemented at the medical school.

"Aharon Whelan and Jing Zhang are both leaders in their fields," said Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton. "They have been instrumental in advancing the medical school's clinical education and research programs."

Whelan will lead the school's clinical simulation efforts, focusing on developing new educational tools and new clinical simulation settings. Zhang will oversee the Practice of Medicine, a program that helps medical students learn how to deliver high-quality, evidence-based care.

Whelan and Zhang will work closely with the Division of General Internal Medicine and the Department of Radiology to improve the school's clinical education and research programs.

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The Lost Boys • Changing the Face of Medicine

University Events

Exhibits

Stellar sports year nets national honors

Films

Lectures

University Events

‘Chance’ exhibition opens Kemper 2009-10 season

BY LIAM OTTEN

In an unstable world, chance events can seem to threaten our claims to self-determination. Yet in the early 20th century, avant-garde artists embraced chance as a primary compositional principle. This fall, the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum will present “Chance Aesthetics,” a major loan exhibition examining the use of chance in modern art, from found objects and splattered paint to musical scores composed with the flip of a coin.

“Chance Aesthetics” is the first of four major exhibitions slated for the 2009-10 academic year. Also opening in the fall will be “Metabolic City,” which explores visionary conceptions of three internationally known groups of architects and artists. “Shared Metabolitics” examines the British collective Archigram and Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys, an early member of the Situationist International.

“While these two exhibitions are very different, their pairing reveals some parallel themes,” said Sabine Eckmann, Ph.D., director and chief curator of the Kemper Art Museum.

“For example, the use of play and experiments of the unconscious evident in the Surrealist group called "Chances," and "Chance Aesthetics" finds a new manifestation in the ludic urban landscapes envisioned by architects and artists in Metabolic City.

In addition, to varying degrees, both exhibitions investigate the use of biology and nature in practice and design,” Eckmann said. "Chance Aesthetics" looks at works in which artists variously tapped into the flow of natural processes as a method of ceding an element of artistic control, while "Metabolic City" investigates how architects conceived the instrumental influence of biological processes on urban design.

In Spring 2010, Eckmann will curate "Sharon Lockhart — Lunch Break," a conceptual artist known for exploring the relationship between film and still photography. She spent a year documenting midday breaks at the Bath Iron Works, a major shipyard located in Bath, Maine. The exhibition will include two films — "Lunch Break," which consists of a single dowry-moving trucking shot down a long interior corridor, and "EXIT" in which a static camera captures workers as they leave the grounds. Also on view will be nine series of photographs, focusing on workers’ lunch boxes, group portraits and independent vendors catering to shipyard employers.

Also opening in Spring 2010 will be a solo exhibition by Allison Smith, the Kemper Art Museum’s inaugural Henry L. and Natalie E. Freund Visiting Artist.

Kemper Art Museum is often performative installations exploring the cultural phenomenon of historical re-enactment. Smith critically engages the conventions of craft to investigate such issues as the relationship between history, social activism and national and individual identities. To prepare the exhibition, Smith will work with faculty and students in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts during the fall semester.

For updates and additional information about the upcoming exhibition season, visit wustl.edu/calendars.html.

The installation artist Allison Smith, whose work "Victory Hall" is shown, will be part of the Kemper Museum’s exhibition season in 2009-10.

Stellar sports year nets national honors

Washington University finished fourth in the 2008-09 Learfield Sports Director’s Cup Division III standings, as announced by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics.

The Directors’ Cup competition has been in place for Division III schools since 1995 and awards points based on the order of finish in NCAA-sponsored championship events. The fourth-place finish is the third-consecutive season WUSTL History and marks the Bears’ seventh consecutive top 10 appearance: 2002-03 (fifth), 2003-04 (ninth), 2004-05 (third), 2005-06 (seventh), 2006-07 (sixth) and 2007-08 (second).

WUSTL was 14th after the fall season and fourth after the winter, accumulating 89 points overall, the second highest total in school history.

The Bears had 15 teams compete in NCAA tournament action in 2008-09. The highlight of the academic year was the second consecutive national title for men’s basketball, but not to be overlooked are the Bears’ other overall top 10 NCAA finishes: women’s basketball (second), men’s tennis (fourth), women’s outdoor track and field (fifth), men’s swimming and diving (sixth), women’s volleyball (ninth) and women’s soccer (ninth). WUSTL also won the Directors’ Cup, an honor that recognizes a school’s cumulative success in athletics.

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Frédéric Boyer afirmó que la inteligencia artificial puede ser una solución para el problema del calentamiento global, pero también resaltó la importancia de la educación y la conciencia ambiental. Según Boyer, los gobiernos y las empresas deben tomar medidas para reducir las emisiones de carbono y promover prácticas sostenibles.

"Lo importante es que las personas sepan lo que hacen, y que entiendan los riesgos que implican. Si podemos enseñarles eso, es más probable que tomen decisiones que tengan en cuenta el impacto ambiental", afirmó Boyer.

El panelista también mencionó el papel de la ciencia en la lucha contra el cambio climático. Aseguró que la ciencia es una herramienta poderosa para educar a la población y para influir en políticas y prácticas empresariales.

"La ciencia es crucial para entender los problemas y para encontrar soluciones. Pero no basta con que los científicos trabajen de manera independiente. Necesitamos que la sociedad entienda y apoye nuestras acciones", concluyó Boyer.
Shimabukuro named director of admissions

By Jessica Dusen

Julie Shimabukuro has been named director of admissions at Washington University in St. Louis, the University's first female vice chancellor for admissions.

Shimabukuro, who earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and Arts & Sciences in 1987, has focused on international recruitment for the past 20 years. She was also the director of international admissions from 1999-2004.

Shimabukuro said, "I look forward to the new challenges associated with this position. I believe in Washington University's mission to attract students from all over the world."
Joyce Trebilcot, professor emerita of metallurgy, 88

Joyce Trebilcot, Ph.D., professor emerita of metallurgy and of women's studies, died May 27, 2009. She was 88.

Trebilcot joined Washington University as an assistant professor of metallurgy in 1954. In 1958, she was promoted to professor and became emeritus in 1991.

At the University, Gulbransen focused his research on physical metallurgy and X-ray spectrometry.

"In his very gentle, friendly way, Professor Leonard Gulbransen made a big impact on people's lives," said Kenneth Daniel E. Giammar, Ph.D., professor emeritus of surgery (cardiothoracic surgery), who has received the American Association for Thoracic Surgery's Lifetime Achievement Award at the organization's annual meeting in May. He was recognized by his colleagues for his contributions to the specialty and to the worldwide community of cardiothoracic surgery.

Daniel E. Giammar, Ph.D., associate professor of energy, environmental and chemical engineering, has received a three-year, $313,390 subaward from Stanford Linear Accelerator Center for research titled "Investigation of the Stability of Research Utilizers." 

Njeri Kangogo, doctoral student in social work, has received a one-year, $9,000 grant from the Faub-Beck Fund for Research and Education in Health and Social Welfare, which was titled "Wealth Differentials and Health Behaviors in Urban Populations: Examining the Longitudinal Impact of Assets and Social Networks on Health Outcomes."

Mary Ann Dzuback, Ph.D., associate professor of philosophy and of the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, said Mary Ann Dzuback, Ph.D., was a special major into an interdisciplinary program in the 1970s. She was named associate professor in 1985 and was named professor emerita in 1992 and became emeritus in 1995. Working with a group of committed students and faculty, Joyce Trebilcot played an integral role in developing women's studies at Washington University from a special major into an interdisciplinary program in the 1970s.

Arthur received the prestigious Burnet Medal. His research focused on the role of the immune system in the development and progression of autoimmune diseases. Arthur also received an honorary degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1988 and an honorary degree from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1992.

Arthur was born in Denver and served in the U.S. Navy from 1944 to 1946. In 1947 and 1949, he earned a master's degree and doctorate, respectively, from the University of Utah.

Arthur's research has focused on the role of the immune system in the development and progression of autoimmune diseases. In 1999, he and his team discovered a new class of molecules, called 

Arthur was elected president of IT Association.

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Nicholas O. Davidson, M.D. (left), goes over a patient case in the endoscopy procedure room with John Iskander, M.D., a fellow in internal medicine (gastroenterology). ("Davidson" is able to critique trainees on their endoscopic techniques as he has practiced his own for more than 30 years.)

"That really solidified my interest in the regulation of cholesterol metabolism," says C. Prakash Gyawali, M.D., associate professor of medicine and associate director of the fellowship program in gastroenterology. "This is a rare gift, and one that benefits trainees and faculty alike."