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SCIENCE FOR THE BENEFIT OF HUMANITY

# BENCHMARKS

THE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2008

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Rockefeller Archive Center makes downtown Manhattan historical records available.** The Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association (DLMA) archives, acquired by the Rockefeller Archive Center in 2000, have been fully processed and are now open for public research. Founded in 1958 by Rockefeller University Life Trustee David Rockefeller, the DLMA is a nonprofit association established to study and address issues of business, cultural and community development in Lower Manhattan and foster collaboration among the public and private sectors and government agencies to achieve cooperative urban renewal. Among the many city landmarks that the DLMA helped to plan and build in its first 50 years are Battery Park City, the South Street Seaport and the World Trade Center. The DLMA collection, for anyone interested in the modern history of New York City, encompasses 85.5 cubic feet of archival material and about 2,000 accompanying photographs. Questions about the collection can be addressed to Senior Archivist Robert Battaly, [battalb@rockefeller.edu](mailto:battalb@rockefeller.edu); more information is available at [archive.rockefeller.edu](http://archive.rockefeller.edu).


**Save paper by opting out of campus mailings.** In support of the university's green initiative, Communications and Public Affairs now offers the campus community the choice to opt out of receiving certain university printed materials, including the Peggy Rockefeller Concerts brochure, the telephone directory, the *Zagat Neighborhood Pocket Guide* and *BenchMarks* — which is available online at [benchmarks.rockefeller.edu](http://benchmarks.rockefeller.edu). To access the opt-out system, go to [www.rockefeller.edu/pubaff](http://www.rockefeller.edu/pubaff) and select the "Publications Opt-out" link under the "Marketing Communications" section. Those who choose not to receive mailings will help reduce paper waste and save costs. Preferences can be modified at any time. For more information, contact Alyssa Gelbard, x7080 or [gelbara@rockefeller.edu](mailto:gelbara@rockefeller.edu).

Announcements for this page may be submitted to [thenning@rockefeller.edu](mailto:thenning@rockefeller.edu).

## BENCHMARKS

**Paul Nurse**, President  
**Jane Rendall**, Corporate Secretary  
**Joe Bonner**, Director of Communications  
**Zach Veilleux**, Executive Editor  
**Talley Henning Brown**, Assistant Editor

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## BENEFITS

### Principal Group to serve as new claims administrator

by ZACH VEILLEUX

The Rockefeller University has chosen The Principal Financial Group, a 129-year-old financial services company headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa, to take over the administration of its self-insured health plan, dental plan and flexible spending accounts. Principal has taken over claims processing for expenses incurred after January 1, 2008 from 21st Century Health and Benefits, which has been the university's claims administrator since 1998.

Though the switch to a new administrator means claims will be reviewed and paid by a new team of processors, the move does not change the benefits offered to Rockefeller employees or the services or doctor networks covered under the Rockefeller University health plan. In addition, mail-order prescriptions filled under the Rockefeller plan will continue to be processed by Express Scripts as they have been in the past.

Rockefeller has historically had renewable one-year contracts with its health benefit administrators, and the Benefits Office, part of Human Resources, reviews the contracts each year to ensure they are maintaining a high level of service. In 2007, after 21st Century was acquired by a much larger firm dealing principally with large government clients, Fringe Benefits Management Company, HR felt the time was right to undertake a broad, more systematic search to make sure the university's claims administrator was best serving the community's needs. "Our emphasis in choosing an administrator is on service," says Ginny Hansen, director of benefits. "It's important that claims are processed quickly and accurately and that customer service personnel are capable of effectively speaking with and serving our diverse community."

Working with an international human

resources consulting firm, Mercer, HR identified 11 companies capable of delivering benefits administration services. The firms included both insurance companies, such as Oxford Health Plans, which provides the university's managed care plan but can also administer self-funded plans, and third-party administrators, such as 21st Century and Principal, which process claims on their clients' behalf. Over three months last year, HR personnel conducted site visits, interviewed key personnel, examined financial disclosure statements and checked references of the companies.

Principal was selected primarily because of its experience providing claims administration to small organizations, particularly hospitals and research facilities in which plan participants have a very high level of knowledge about health care. "At Principal, our claims and inquiries will be handled by a single group of seven processors," says Virginia Huffman, vice president for human resources. "It's appealing to us that phone calls are not routed through large call centers as they are at many national vendors."

Other benefits of Principal are faster turnaround of claims, a nursing staff that can provide medical support for those who need assistance, a more robust Web site and the option of direct deposit for flexible spending account reimbursements. Like 21st Century, Principal is also able to process and pay overseas claims.

"Continuity was also a key part of the decision," says Ms. Huffman. "Because Principal uses the PHCS doctors' network and Express Scripts, switching to them means that disruptions are minimized for the majority of plan members. For many people, carrying the new ID card instead of

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## ADMINISTRATION

### New head of security is former NYPD inspector

by TALLEY HENNING BROWN



**New beat.** Jim Rogers in Founder's Hall.

James Rogers has been on the payroll for almost a month, but he's had an eye on the safety of Rockefeller University for years. A 22-year veteran of the New York Police Department, Mr. Rogers became Rockefeller's new director of security on January 2, filling the position left open by the retirement of Joseph Nekola, who led the Office of Security for 18 years (see "Joe Nekola sets sail," page 2).

Mr. Rogers joined the police force in 1986. During his first years in uniform, he earned a bachelor of science degree from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and in 2001 he completed a master's degree in public administration from Marist College. Mr. Rogers rose steadily through the ranks of the police department, to sergeant in 1991, lieutenant in 1995, captain in 1997, deputy inspector in 2001 and inspector in 2003. He served as commanding officer in various units, including, from 2002 to 2006, Manhattan's 19th Precinct, which serves much of the Upper East Side includ-

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## FROM PAUL NURSE

### A new seminar series

One of the important things about being part of an academic community is the opportunity to attend lectures and seminars. Rockefeller has an impressive calendar, with some of the world's most acclaimed scientists sharing their findings and opinions in a variety of fora each week. The university invests time and effort in running these series and I encourage everyone to make use of the lectures and seminars. In this column I am also introducing a new series which I think will be of broad interest to the community.

First, a note about etiquette. I've said before, and I am concerned that I have to say again, that people should not leave the auditorium en masse as the question-and-answer session is getting under way. Getting up as the discussion begins is rude to our speakers and to

those who wish to engage with them, and it reflects very poorly on us as a university. If you are going to attend a lecture — particularly the Friday Lecture — I ask that you please plan to stay to the end. If you absolutely cannot, sit near the back and leave quietly as the question-and-answer proceeds.

The Friday Lecture Series, a Rockefeller tradition, continues to bring in excellent people who can speak on topics of broad interest to our scientific community. Charlie Rice is the chair of the selection committee this year. Credit for the ongoing success of this series goes to him and to numerous members of our faculty, postdocs and students who have worked to identify, recruit and host Friday Lecture speakers, as well as to those in the administration who arrange their visits and take care

of the details.

Our internal lecture series — the Monday Lectures — provides an opportunity for us to hear from our own faculty. We also use the Monday afternoon slot to introduce to the community faculty candidates identified in the open search process. This winter we will hear seminars from around a dozen potential candidates, and I encourage everyone to attend as many of these as possible. The campus reaction to these speakers is an important factor in deciding whom we will extend offers to; it's also helpful to our recruiting efforts when the candidates see a large turnout and have positive interactions at these events.

In addition, several more-specialized lecture series are worth highlighting. The weekly Seminar in Clinical Research,

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ing Rockefeller’s campus. “This precinct is one of the safest, and at the same time one of the busiest precincts in New York City,” Mr. Rogers says. “Rockefeller was part of my responsibility during those years, and every time I had occasion to be on campus, the security guards and everyone else here were always extremely professional. I was very impressed and I guess you could say that, unbeknownst to me, I was already laying the seeds of my future career here.”

Mr. Rogers’s final position with the NYPD, as commanding officer for the deputy commissioner of operations, honed analytical skills that he intends to bring to Rockefeller. The “CompStat” process innovated by this unit — basically an organizational management tool involving intense statistical analysis — is renowned among law enforcement agencies for its effectiveness in improving operations and reducing crime.

His move to private-sector security was a decision made in part for family reasons. “I have three small children at home, and I loved working for the NYPD, but it’s an unusually demanding job. I’m really looking forward to spending more time with my family and weighting the balance between work and life a little more in my favor, but I feel the same passion here at this remarkable institution that I had with the Police Department,” Mr. Rogers says.

“After Ginny Huffman and I had interviewed a dozen serving and retired NYPD captains, deputy inspectors and inspectors, we both reached the conclusion that Jimmy Rogers was the man for Rockefeller,” says Vice President for Scientific and Facility Operations John Tooze. “His wide experience, including having served as commanding officer of our precinct, his intelligence and responsiveness were compelling.”

Among Mr. Rogers’s highest priorities as director of Rockefeller security is to instill safety awareness in all staff and students. “This community is a beautiful place, but we come and go from this community, and if I can keep everyone who comes here safer, whether they’re on campus or off, then I’ve done my job,” he says. Additionally, he will follow up on a request among his staff for additional training, and create a plan to keep security personnel

RETIREMENT

Joe Nekola sets sail  
Former director of security retires to a life on the high seas

by TALLEY HENNING BROWN

At the hour of five, most university offices close up shop for the night. Security, however, is a 24/7 business, and for the last 18 years, Joseph Nekola kept operations running smoothly. Mr. Nekola, who left Rockefeller University at the end of January for semiretirement, will soon be running operations of a different sort — as captain and crew of his trawler motor yacht, exploring the Atlantic Sea Board.

Mr. Nekola has worked in security — public and private — for more than four decades. Born and raised in the Bronx, he attended American River College in Sacramento, California, before returning to the East Coast and entering the Police Academy in 1965. His talents were quickly recognized and he received the Bloomingdale Trophy — an engraved .38-caliber pistol — for attaining the highest overall average of academics, physical training and marksmanship. While working in the New York Police Department, he furthered his education at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Iona College. During his 25 years as one of New York’s finest, he was assigned to the Tactical Patrol Force (the precursor to the SWAT unit), was promoted to sergeant, lieutenant and captain and served with various patrol and investigative units, including the Major Case Squad and the Bronx Dis-



Coast guard. Joe Nekola on the bridge of his yacht, the *Sea Pearl*.

trict Attorney’s Detective Squad, for both of which he was commanding officer.

In 1989, Mr. Nekola was hired as director of Rockefeller University security by President Joshua Lederberg, and he has served in that capacity through the administrations of six Rockefeller presidents. “I will miss everything about Rockefeller. The people who work here — academics and staff — who are so impressive in their dedication to the university and their work. Of course I will miss my numerous friends here, but thankfully I will be able to continue these friendships,” Mr. Nekola says. “I will also miss being here to witness and enjoy our beautiful campus as it adjusts to the changes in the seasons each year.”

Mr. Nekola is leaving an impressive mark on the campus himself, however. Among his proudest accomplishments of his years at Rockefeller, Mr. Nekola

spearheaded Rockefeller’s successful application in 2006 for a grant from the New York State Department of Homeland Security to upgrade and improve the university’s perimeter closed circuit television system. At \$75,000, it was the highest amount given to any institution in the state. Work on the new system was completed in December.

Mr. Nekola will continue part time in the security field and risk assessment consulting, but he’ll spend the majority of his time on the *Sea Pearl*, his yacht and home. He plans to complete the requirements for the United States Coast Guard master 100-ton license next month, and then he’ll begin a three-year cruise from the Florida Keys and the Bahamas to Nova Scotia. “Then I’ll decide whether to move on to the Caribbean and South America. But during these adventures there will be numerous trips back here to see friends,” he says.

“He will be greatly missed,” says Assistant Director of Security Michael John, who has worked with Mr. Nekola for 18 years. “He is a great leader. He was on top of everything going on at the university, but he took the time to be genuinely involved with his staff. He was concerned about us personally and professionally, and was eager to help with any kind of problem. I know I am not alone in these thoughts.”

abreast of best practices established in the law enforcement community, amended to fit the university’s needs. To that end, he maintains memberships in organizations that liaise with local, state and federal government and law enforcement executives. “My motto here is ‘think globally, act locally,’” he says. “It is imperative that

I stay informed about events happening elsewhere in the world — like the spate of terrorist activities in Asia and the Middle East the last few years — because those events have much to teach us as far as how the authorities react to them.

“What is most important to me, though, is making sure I don’t forget that the

organization is run by people — that those people are the most important entity in the organization,” Mr. Rogers says. “One thing I think I do well is make sure my people are aware of their importance to me and the importance of their role in the operation. That’s something I want to bring to this place as well.”

FACULTY DEPARTURE

Christian Münz to direct research institute in Zurich  
Rockefeller immunologist to accept appointments at University of Zurich and Swiss Federal Institute of Technology

by TALLEY HENNING BROWN

Christian Münz, head of the Laboratory of Viral Immunobiology, has been appointed the new director of the Institute of Experimental Immunology — a research vehicle collaboratively run by the University of Zurich and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. Dr. Münz, who came to Rockefeller University as a postdoc 10 years ago and began his first independent lab here in 2003, was offered the new position in January 2007 and will begin moving his laboratory to Europe this August.

An alumnus of the University of Tübingen, where he received a bachelor’s degree in human medicine and master’s and doctoral degrees in biochemistry, Dr. Münz came to the United States and Rockefeller University in 1998, to work as a postdoc in Ralph Steinman’s Laboratory of Cellular Physiology and Immunology. In 2001 he joined the faculty as



PHOTO: ZACH VELLEUX

research assistant professor, and two years later he was presiding over his own lab as assistant professor.

The Laboratory of Viral Immunobiology focuses on understanding the immune control of the Epstein Barr virus (EBV), an exclusively human virus of the herpes family that is transmitted in saliva and has been linked to several forms of cancer. EBV infects over 90 percent of the world’s adult human population, but only a minority of infections — usually associated with loss of EBV-specific immune control — are symptomatic. In these

instances, the virus can lead to an array of devastating malignancies, including Burkitt’s lymphoma, Hodgkin’s disease and nasopharyngeal carcinoma. Dr. Münz’s primary goal is to explain and correct the lack of immune control in people who have EBV-associated tumors, but Dr.

Münz is also studying the 90 percent of healthy EBV carriers. “If we can identify the component of immune control in these latent infections, we might be able to use it against other viruses,” he says. To both of these ends, Dr. Münz has begun preclinical testing of two possible EBV vaccines, using mice in which a human immune system has been reconstituted.

The research is driven by Dr. Münz’s fascination with the immune system’s ability to troubleshoot. “It’s an extraordinarily complex system. It has to identify foreign cells, transmit information about them to central areas of decision-making and then mold the appropriate responses. It is an intricate collection of mechanisms for problem-solving, evolution’s solution to protect a multicellular organism,” he says. “And it’s a very effective system, when it is triggered correctly, so if we could use this tool that evolution has come up with, then medicine could be much more refined than it is now.”

His new position at the Institute of Experimental Immunology will facilitate Dr. Münz’s research in two particular ways. First, the funding structure — with the majority of research funds as well as researcher salaries coming from the university — is well suited to longer-term

projects, like those with humanized mouse models. Second, Dr. Münz will have access to patient samples from the University of Zurich’s research hospital. In addition to his administrative responsibilities as institute director, Dr. Münz will hold the title of “extraordinary professor,” the Swiss equivalent of a tenured associate professorship.

Dr. Münz will begin moving his laboratory to Zurich this August, and four of his current lab members will make the move with him over the following few months: students Rosa Barreira Da Silva and Till Strowig, and postdocs Monique Gannage and Sonja Meixlsperger. The laboratory in the Detlev W. Bronk Research Building will remain open for the duration of the move, until spring of 2009.

“Rockefeller is a very special place, and I will miss it greatly. The light load of administrative duties here and the high degree of scientific independence are things that are not easily replicated at other institutions and I certainly appreciate them. I will also miss the many collaborative relationships I have built here over the last decade,” says Dr. Münz. “I am glad I will be closer to my family, who are in Germany, but I will certainly miss New York City as well.”



# \$400,000 grant creates new fund for translational research at Rockefeller

by TALLEY HENNING BROWN

With a \$400,000 grant from the Achelis and Bodman Foundations, Rockefeller University’s Bridges to Better Medicine Forum has launched a new fund devoted to advancing translational research that is on the cusp of commercial viability. The Technology Innovation Fund will finance four short-term projects a year, each with \$30,000 to \$70,000. The Office of Scientific and Facility Operations, which is administering the fund, began accepting project proposals yesterday and expects to award its first projects by March 3.

The Technology Innovation Fund is aimed at research that is no longer in its early stages but has not yet been developed

into a market-ready product — research that is particularly difficult to fund through traditional sources.

“The National Institutes of Health and other such organizations offer very few individual funding opportunities for this kind of research, because they don’t consider it basic research. Similarly, industry resources like pharmaceutical and medical technology companies don’t want to fund something until there’s a product they can market,” says Associate Vice President for Technology Transfer Kathleen Denis. “With this kind of dedicated funding, we’re poised to give these important projects the push they need to continue.” Grants

may pay for further experimental data, for example, or to reduce an invention to practice, enable a successful patent application or make a technology more commercially interesting to investors.

Project proposals will be judged along several criteria, including novelty, proof of concept, feasibility and market potential.

Proposals will be reviewed and chosen by a committee of life sciences, industry and investing professionals: Peter Goodfellow, former discovery executive at Glaxo-SmithKline and a Rockefeller University visiting scholar in 2007; Teena Lerner, Rockefeller alumna and founding head of hedge fund management firm Rx Capital;

Paul Maddon, member of The Rockefeller University Council, former Howard Hughes Medical Institute researcher and founding executive of Progenics Pharmaceuticals; and Lewis Sanders, Rockefeller University trustee and CEO and chairman of investment research firm AllianceBernstein.

Established in 2003, the Bridges to Better Medicine Forum encourages knowledge exchange among scientists and investors, analysts and industry executives, for the purpose of advancing “bench-to-bedside” research. With the seed grant, the Bridges initiative is now contributing to the research enterprise at Rockefeller.

## CAMPUS NEWS

# A storeroom, transformed

## Child and Family Center’s newly opened art studio offers kids a place to be creative

by TALLEY HENNING BROWN

Art is a messy business, but the kids at the Child and Family Center have a new handle on it. The CFC’s art studio, created last fall in what used to be a storage room, gives kids in the university’s child care facility a dedicated place to express their creativity — without staining the carpet.

Funded by \$25,000 in private donations from the university’s *Women & Science* program, renovations to the space were done entirely by Plant Operations personnel; the room’s furniture was paid for by the Parents’ Association. “What I really like about this is how excited everyone is about having this dedicated space,” says CFC Director Marjorie Goldsmith. “It’s hard enough for elementary and even secondary schools in this country to hold onto their art programs, but it’s actually rare for an early-childhood program to have one, and we do.”

The studio’s design reflects more consideration than just the need for kid-sized sinks and chairs. Paints and colored pencils and other supplies are organized by color or shape with an eye toward inspiring students to be thoughtful about the medium they choose. Shelves are laid out with groupings of singular objects found (by the kids, of course) in nature — a basket of pinecones on one shelf, a bowl of round stones on another. The room is relatively small, with elbow space for only a few children at a time, but that, Ms. Goldsmith explains, is part of the point. “Many of our activities with the kids are like that,” she says. “The kids are here for as long as eight or nine hours a day, and they need more than just large-group activity. There’s a pretty universal attitude here that we don’t want these kids to just have full-time babysitting;



**Masterpiece theater.** Maggie McGregor Corson, 4, takes advantage of an afternoon in the CFC art studio to make progress on her untitled mixed-media work.

we want this to be a fully educational environment.”

The CFC’s educational objective is defined along the lines of the Reggio Emilia Approach, an early-childhood educational philosophy created in the 1940s in Italy and now followed by many American preschools. The approach is characterized by its attention to different learning styles, the significance it places on children’s self-expression and its recasting of the teacher’s role as that of director in a mainly child-initiated learn-

ing process. The CFC has one part-time art teacher, Lindsay Lauder, who is also a practicing artist and art therapist.

Works by Rockefeller’s young artists-in-residence are regularly on display along the entrance wall of the Weiss Café, but the kids have already garnered attention from the larger community. On the first weekend in November, the Barnes and Noble bookstore at East 86th Street and Second Avenue helped raise funds for the studio by donating 15 percent of any purchase made by

someone who mentioned the CFC. The proceeds — about \$180 — went toward art books for the studio. And a recent field trip to the Museum of Modern Art illustrated the success of the program when the Rockefeller kids recognized Claude Monet’s *Water Lilies*. “It was the most wonderful thing to see these young children who not only knew something about the Monets but were so excited to see them in person,” says Ms. Goldsmith. “They totally surprised all the calm, quiet adults in the room.”

## Principal (continued from page 1)

the old one is all that’s required.”

In addition to the PHCS network, doctors in the Weill Cornell Physician Organization — which includes most doctors who practice full-time at Weill Medical College of Cornell University — will continue to be covered in-network. The addition of the Weill Cornell network to the Rockefeller health plan was negotiated last year after the Weill Cornell doctors’ group dropped PHCS (then known as Multiplan). “Since so many of our people use Weill Cornell doctors, we felt it was important to try to work out an arrangement where they would continue to be covered in-network, and it was critical that we were able to preserve this relationship with the move to Principal,” says Ms. Huffman.

## A new seminar series (continued from page 1)

held Wednesdays at noon, focuses on the more clinical aspects of biology. The Center for Studies in Physics and Biology Seminars, Tuesday afternoons, are particularly discursive. And the monthly Harvey Society Lectures, held in the evenings, attract very high-caliber lecturers, speaking to a scientific audience from both inside and outside the Rockefeller community. (The university’s newly revamped online calendar of events makes it easy to track all the regular lectures.)

This winter, we’re also pleased to announce a new lecture series called the Special Seminar Series. The purpose of

this series is twofold: First, it’s to expand our exposure to speakers in areas that we are interested in actively developing at Rockefeller. A number of this year’s Special Seminar speakers work in the fields of evolution, ecology and ethology. These are areas in which we do not have a large number of faculty currently working, and they are important fields which I would like Rockefeller to be more involved in. The first step toward that is to hear about research that is under way elsewhere and meet the people behind it.

The second purpose of the new series is to support recruitment efforts led by

this year’s faculty search committee. For that reason, the series will also include speakers from all areas of potential interest to our ongoing open faculty search. These speakers will be selected by the various subcommittees of the faculty search committee, and the seminars will provide an opportunity to learn more about each speaker’s field and specific area of research.

I encourage everyone to attend the Special Seminar Series, held Wednesday afternoons in Welch Hall. As always, I am eager to hear feedback from the community about how our various lecture series can be improved.



# MILESTONES

## PROMOTIONS, AWARDS AND PERSONNEL NEWS

### Awarded:

**Lu Bai**, postdoc in Frederick Cross’s Laboratory of Yeast Molecular Genetics, and **Erik Debler**, postdoc in Günter Blobel’s Laboratory of Cell Biology, 2007 Damon Runyon Fellowships from the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation. The three-year award recognizes outstanding postdocs conducting innovative basic and translational cancer research. Dr. Bai is investigating key features in promoter architecture and chromatin structure that govern the transcription of cell cycle regulated genes. Dr. Debler is researching core structures of the nuclear pore complex (NPC). Chromosomal translocations of NPC proteins are linked to various types of cancer, including myeloid and lymphoid leukemias.

**Thomas Tuschl**, the 2007 Max Delbrück Medal, from the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine. The award, presented November 12 in Berlin, is in recognition of Dr. Tuschl’s research with RNA interference, which makes it possible to selectively silence genes, including those in human cells. The research is now being used to gain information on the functions of certain genes and may eventually be used in the treatment of neurological, eye and genetic diseases as well as cancer.

**Thomas Tuschl**, a 2007 Karl Heinz Beckurts Prize, for his research on RNA interference. The prize, presented in Munich December 7, is awarded for outstanding scientific or technological achievement that carries implications for further scientific innovation.

**Thomas Tuschl**, a 2008 Ernst Jung Prize for Medicine, from the Jung Foundation for Science and Research. The prize ceremony will be held May 9.

### AWARDS & HONORS

## Following in family’s footsteps, Alicia Darnell wins national science prize

by TALLEY HENNING BROWN

For Alicia Darnell, science fairs are serious business. After two summers spent in research laboratories, the high school senior took home more than just extra credit — Ms. Darnell is this year’s second-place winner in the national Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology. The daughter of Associate Research Professor Jennifer Darnell and Professor Robert Darnell and the granddaughter of Professor Emeritus James Darnell Jr., Ms. Darnell — herself a former Science Outreach student — represents the third generation of Rockefeller University scientists in her family. Her project, titled “Alternative Splicing Defects Linked to Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS),” garnered her a \$50,000 scholarship. The award was announced December 3 at New York University.

In recognition of her accomplishment, Rockefeller President Paul Nurse named Ms. Darnell “Professor for a Day” and invited the Darnell family to tea in the President’s Office following the Holiday Lectures on Science on December 27. “Alicia’s achievement, at the age of 17, is an especially remarkable credit to an already remarkable family,” Dr. Nurse says.

Ms. Darnell’s scientific roots run deep on both sides of her family tree. Alongside the paterfamilias, her maternal grandfather, Eugene Cordes, is a chemist who has worked in both academia and the pharmaceutical industry, and her maternal grandmother, Shirley Cordes, is a Ph.D. biologist. “My family didn’t try to push me into science, but I’ve had a lifelong immersion in it, so my interest in research came very naturally,” Ms. Darnell says. Her interests don’t end in the laboratory, however; she is a member of the varsity lacrosse team at Pelham Memorial High School, where she’s a senior editor of the student newspaper.

The idea for Ms. Darnell’s winning project came during her stint as a Rockefeller Science Outreach student. She spent her first summer with the program, 2006, in A. James Hudspeth’s laboratory,

### Promoted (academic appointments):

**Nathalie Blachere**, from research associate to research assistant professor, Robert Darnell Lab.

**Marc-Werner Dobenecker**, from postdoctoral associate to research associate, Tarakhovsky Lab.

**Luisa Miranda Figueiredo**, from postdoctoral associate to research associate, George Cross Lab.

**Arnaud Lacoste**, from postdoctoral associate to research associate, Brivanlou Lab.

**Anura Rambukkana**, from research assistant professor to research associate professor, Gotschlich Lab.

### Hired:

**Adewale Adenuga**, laboratory helper, Fuchs Lab.

**John Agapiou**, postdoctoral associate, Magnasco Lab.

**Reitu Agrawal**, manager of administration and operations, Rice Lab.

**Thomas Allen**, mechanic, Housing Scholars Residence.

**Laura Banaszynski**, postdoctoral associate, Allis Lab.

**Helen Bateup**, postdoctoral fellow, Greengard Lab.

**Jimmy Beltran Argueta**, animal attendant, CBC.

**Kristin Bollas**, archival assistant, Archive Center.

**Kayee Chan**, inventory control clerk, Purchasing.

**Luiz Chaves**, postdoctoral associate, Gadsby Lab.

**Mitchell Dabrio**, security guard, Security.

**Hongzheng Dai**, postdoctoral fellow, Chua Lab.

**Ype de Jonge**, visiting fellow, Rice Lab.

**Beat Fierz**, postdoctoral fellow, Muir Lab.

**Jonathan Fisher**, postdoctoral fellow, Hudspeth Lab.

**Janine Fleri**, manuscript coordinator *JCB*, The Rockefeller University Press.

**Clement Gomes**, security guard, Security.

**Adriana Gonzalez**, research assistant, Krueger Lab.

**Kenneth Gorelick**, member of the adjunct faculty, Fischetti Lab.

**Sacha Hacker**, laboratory technician, Brivanlou Lab.

**Johannes Hemmes**, postdoctoral associate, Chua Lab.

**Jesse Izaguirre**, doorperson, Housing Scholars Residence.

**Thomas Jandl**, postdoctoral associate, Ravetch Lab.

**Anthoneth Jeffrey**, health information assistant, Hospital HIS.

**Kate Jeffrey**, postdoctoral associate, Tarakhovsky Lab.

**Daisy Jose**, assistant project manager, Planning and Construction.

**Emmanuelle Jouanguy**, visiting assistant professor, Rice Lab.

**Ilia Karatsoreos**, postdoctoral fellow, McEwen Lab.

**Leah Kelly**, postdoctoral associate, Friedman Lab.

**Ha Na Kim**, postdoctoral associate, James Darnell Lab.

**Veselin Kostov**, research assistant, Program for the Human Environment.

**Stephen H. Kunihiro**, animal attendant, CBC.

**Shannon Lauberth**, postdoctoral fellow, Roeder Lab.

**Gheorge Lungu**, postdoctoral associate, Goulianos Lab.

**Marina Maiuri**, administrative assistant, MacKinnon Lab.

**Courtney McBride**, human resources assistant, Human Resources.

**Sonja Meixlsperger**, postdoctoral associate, Münz Lab.

**Kalpesh Patel**, senior systems administrator, Information Technology.

**Paola Piras**, postdoctoral fellow, Kreek Lab.

**Makida Price**, animal attendant, CBC.

**James Rogers**, director of security, Security.

**Popi Sarma**, research assistant, G. Cross Lab.

**Edmund Schwartz**, postdoctoral associate, Muir Lab.

**Uri Sela**, postdoctoral fellow, Steinman Lab.

**Jorge Serrano**, custodian, Plant Operations Custodial Services.

**Julie Sheldon**, postdoctoral fellow, Rice Lab.

**Radhika Subramanian**, postdoctoral associate, Kapoor Lab.

**Richard Torres**, assistant project archivist, Rockefeller Archive Center.

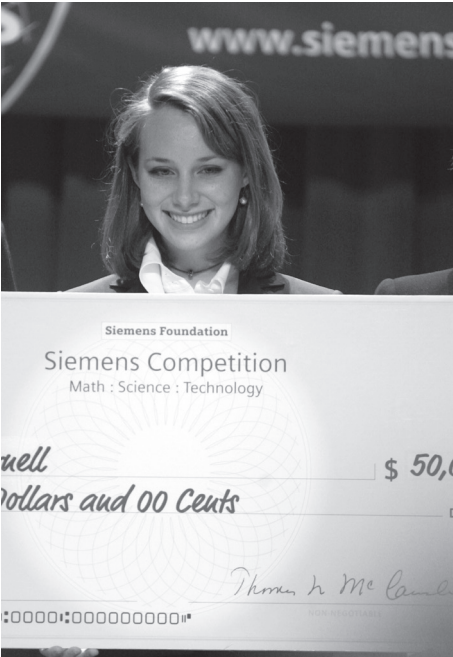
**Veronica Whalen**, nurse manager, Hospital Nursing Inpatient.

**Julie White**, comparative pathologist, CBC.

**Ming Yan**, postdoctoral associate, Goulianos Lab.

**Joaquin Zetino**, receiving clerk, Purchasing.

This publication lists new hires, retirements, awards and promotions. Staff promotions are listed yearly; academic promotions and appointments are listed monthly.



**Family tradition.** Alicia Darnell receiving her Siemens scholarship (left), and having tea with her family (from left: Jennifer, Bob and Jim) in Paul Nurse’s office in December.



PHOTOS: BRUCE GILBERT

modeling the external auditory organ of the zebrafish in vitro. “That model is very similar, mechanistically, to stem cells, and my interest in stem cells meshed with my interest in disease therapeutics during that summer,” she says. The following year, she was the first Outreach student to conduct her project collaboratively, spending part of the summer in her father’s lab and part in the laboratory of Tom Maniatis at Harvard University. Her research at Harvard focused on identifying alternative mRNA splicing defects that might play a causative role in ALS, or Lou Gehrig’s disease. “I was so excited to get my first results in the Maniatis lab that I knew I had to enter the research in the Siemens Competition,” she says.

Considered one of the most prestigious high school competitions in the country, the Siemens Competition was established in 1998 by the Siemens Foundation, which provides over \$2 million a year in scholarships to students and teachers in the fields

of math and science. It’s a grueling contest. Entrants from across the country — this year there were over 1,600 team and individual projects — are winnowed down to a maximum of 300 on the basis of research abstracts they send to a panel of judges chosen by the College Board and the Educational Testing Service. At the semifinal contests, which are held at colleges across the country in October, up to five individuals and five teams are chosen for each of six regions. The winners of the regional contests in November — one individual and one team for each region — each receive a \$3,000 scholarship, a silver medal and a slot in the nationals. (The regional winners’ schools each receive \$2,000 to go toward science and math education.)

At the national contest, this year held at New York University in December, students compete for a top prize of \$100,000. “First you give a 12-minute presentation of your work, before a dozen judges, and then you get a 12-minute session to defend your

research, kind of like a mini-dissertation, where those 12 judges all get to ask questions,” Ms. Darnell explains. “I had no idea what to expect from them; there were too many of them for me to be able to tell how I was doing. When they called my name for second place, it was absolutely surreal.”

Having cleared that hurdle with flying colors, Ms. Darnell now has the task of choosing a college, a question she says is still firmly up in the air. “I know I want to somehow combine scientific research, specifically in medicine and epidemiology, with journalism,” she says. “So I’m looking for programs that will help me do that.”

“It’s so good to see someone with Alicia’s intelligence go into science, which really needs young minds,” says James Darnell. “And aside from her success in the laboratory, we are very proud of Alicia’s composure and her speaking ability, which are so important. She can get through an entire presentation without saying ‘like’ a single time.”