

## **University of Massachusetts junior faculty visit NIEHS to find a home for their research**

*By Joe Balintfy*

A group of 10 junior faculty members from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst visited NIEHS Sept. 12 to get the basics on submitting grant applications and to discuss how their environmental health research fits with the institute's mission.

"We matched their research interests with the most relevant Program Office, so each visitor was able to get personalized advice from the program staff," said NIEHS Health Scientist Administrator Jerry Heindel, Ph.D. He added that NIEHS encourages researchers to speak with program officers about their plans, and to stop by when they are in the area. However, this visit was the first of its kind on this scale.

### **Insightful information from the institute**

Led by Mary Fechner, Ph.D., of the university's Office of Research Development, and hosted by Heindel, the group met NIEHS senior leadership, including Deputy Director Richard Woychik, Ph.D., and Gwen Collman, Ph.D., director of the Division of Extramural Research and Training (DERT). The visitors toured NIEHS, heard presentations about the funding process, and had one-on-one meetings with the staff.

Collman gave specific tips about how to stay connected to NIEHS, advising the visitors to read the NIEHS [strategic plan](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/strategicplan/index.cfm)

(<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/strategicplan/index.cfm>)

and the Environmental Factor newsletter; attend NIEHS workshops or events, including the [council meetings](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/boards/naehsc/index.cfm)

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, in person or by webcast; participate in webinars, for example, the Partnerships for Environmental Public Health, exposome, and inflammation series; and interact with NIEHS staff at meetings, such as the conferences hosted by the Society of Toxicology and International Society of Environmental Epidemiology.

### **Putting a face on the funding process**

Assistant Professors from the university's School of Public Health Division of Environmental Health Sciences emphasized the value of the opportunity to talk with NIEHS program officers. "I was excited to be able to talk to people who can support my research and help me focus it so that it will be fundable," said Laura Vandenberg, Ph.D. "That's what we all care about."

"I made two applications last year, both for NIEHS grants, and I didn't receive any," commented Alexander Suvorov, Ph.D. "Now, I think that with a better understanding of the process, I will be able to do it."

The group was able to visit together as part of a career development program at the university, which had invited NIEHS staff to visit earlier this year.

(Joe Balintfy is a public affairs specialist in the NIEHS Office of Communications and Public Liaison.)



*"Keep us informed of your successes and research findings on NIEHS supported projects because your success is our success," Collman requested of the visiting University of Massachusetts junior faculty. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*



*"This visit was a way for new university staff to learn about NIEHS in general, and better understand the personnel and programs they should know about," said Heindel. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*



*“It’s wonderful to have the chance for the scientists to go in-depth with their research to learn more about how this institute functions,” said Fechner, far right. “It’s one thing to read a website, but it’s another thing to see how it all works.” (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*

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