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Awards and honors

May 16, 2001

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has announced that Sloan Research Fellowships will go to 104 young scientists and economists, including six from MIT: Assistant Professors **Harold J. Schwalbe** of chemistry, **Sendhil Mullainathan** of economics, **Hubert L. Bray** of mathematics, **J. Troy Littleton** of biology, and **Deepto Chakrabarty** and **Alexander van Oudenaarden** of physics. The fellowships are awarded to young faculty members who have demonstrated great research potential in the physical sciences, economics, mathematics and neuroscience. Sloan Fellows receive research grants of \$35,000 for a two-year period.

J. Troy Littleton has been selected as a Searle Scholar for 2001-04. Dr. Littleton is an assistant professor in the Center for Learning and Memory and the Department of Biology. His laboratory studies the molecular mechanisms underlying neuronal signalling using *Drosophila* as a model organism. The Searle Foundation awards about 15 grants per year to junior faculty at the assistant professor level. Professor **Catherine Drennan** in the Department of Chemistry was MIT's other recent recipient.

Three students have been named 2001 Goldwater Scholars: **Emily R. Craparo**, a junior in aeronautics and astronautics; **Sanjay Basu**, a junior in brain and cognitive sciences; and **Alexander Wissner-Gross**, a sophomore in electrical engineering and computer science. The Goldwater Scholarship of up to \$7,500 per year is a prestigious undergraduate award in the fields of mathematics, the natural sciences and engineering.

Robert Langer, the Germeshausen Professor of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering, has been named again as chair of the Food and Drug Administration Science Board, the FDA's highest advisory board. Professor Langer has served as a board member since 1995 and as chair since 1999.

Sommer Gentry, a graduate student in electrical engineering and computer science, has received a Computational Science Graduate Fellowship from the Department of Energy (DOE). The award, administered by the Krell Institute, includes a monthly stipend, tuition and fees, and a three-month practicum at a DOE lab. Ms. Gentry does research in the Laboratory for Information and Decision Systems in the area of optimization/control theory.

Institute Professor **Sheila Widnall** of aeronautics and astronautics has received the 2000 AAES Chair's Award from the American Association of Engineering Societies. The award recognizes "an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the welfare of our nation." Professor Widnall was Secretary of the Air Force from 1993-97.

Professor of Marine Systems **Henry Marcus** in ocean engineering has been appointed to the 26-member Marine Transportation System (MTS) National Advisory Council, which advises the Secretary of Transportation on matters related to the marine transportation system. He will serve as co-chair of research and development and information technology, responsible for identifying relevant R&D projects to support the MTS vision.

Professor Marcus has also been appointed to the Federal Transportation Advisory Group. The transportation contingent of that group includes 24 members representing four different sectors -- aerospace, land, multimodal and water -- working to achieve three national transportation goals in the next 50 years: an integrated national transportation system that can move anyone and anything, anywhere, any time, on time at an affordable price; a transportation system without fatalities and injuries resulting from system or operator error, or terrorist intervention; and a transportation system without transportation-related environmental impacts and not dependent on foreign energy.

The American Mathematical Society has awarded a \$40,000 Centennial Fellowship to Dr. **Ravi Vakil**, a C.L.E. Moore Instructor in the Department of Mathematics. He is one of four Centennial Fellows for 2001-02. His main work to date has been on the geometry of algebraic curves and maps of algebraic curves, as well as the intersection theory of moduli spaces, especially of curves and stable maps. His current interests involve the interactions of algebraic geometry with nearby fields, including enumerative geometry, mathematical physics, number theory and combinatorics. He plans to use the Centennial Fellowship to visit the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute in Berkeley, as well as Stanford University.

Rebecca Christianson of MIT is one of three American PhD candidates in physics to be awarded the \$1,000 Scharff-Goldhaber Prize this year. The award was established to recognize substantial promise and accomplishment by women graduate students in physics who are enrolled at Stony Brook University or who are performing their thesis research at the US Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory. Administered by Brookhaven Women in Science (BWIS), the prize honors the late nuclear physicist Gertrude Scharff-Goldhaber, who in 1950 became the first woman PhD physicist appointed to the Brookhaven staff, and later helped found the BWIS.

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