

# THE DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS NUTRITION



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## RESEARCH UPDATES

Assistant Professor **Christina Economos**, Ph.D., holder of the New Balance Chair in Childhood Nutrition, has teamed up with other Tufts professors and community organizations to study the health risks facing new immigrants. Supported with seed money from Tisch College through the Tufts Community Research Center, the researchers recently secured a \$2.4 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to conduct a community-based participatory study over the next four years. Economos will conduct the research along with Tufts

co-investigators **Aviva Must**, Ph.D., (Medical School); Associate Professor **David Gute**, Ph.D., (Engineering); Assistant Professor **Raymond Hyatt**, Ph.D., (Medical School) and Professor **Elizabeth Goodman**, M.D., (Tufts Medical Center). The research will focus on Brazilian, Haitian and Latin American immigrants who came to the United States during the past five years and currently live in Somerville. The project aims to assess risk factors for obesity in the households of new immigrant families, and then, with the participation of community partners, design an intervention that targets the household and the parent-child relationship. The study builds, in part, on the successful Shape Up Somerville research initiative, which was led by Economos.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is hosting an e-forum based on a paper authored by Assistant Professor **Kathleen Merrigan**, Ph.D. The paper proposes the creation of an Organic Research Centers Alliance that would help link existing institutions with scientific credentials to promote transdisciplinary organic agriculture research and ensure that the research is shared worldwide. The online forum, which ends December 15, is described at [http://www.fao.org/organicag/oa-forum/en/?no\\_cache=1](http://www.fao.org/organicag/oa-forum/en/?no_cache=1), and is moderated in part by **Katie Cerretani**, N09; **Maya Bassford**, N10; and **Melissa Bailey**, N11.

Associate Professor **Miriam Nelson**, Ph.D., has been named to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. The committee is made up of 13 prominent medical and scientific researchers, all leaders in their fields, from universities and scientific institutions across the United States.

## HERE & THERE

Professor **Johanna Dwyer**, D.Sc., gave a presentation at the American Dietetic Association

Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo about new online sources of information about dietary supplements for the Office of Dietary Supplements.

Dean **Eileen Kennedy**, D.Sc., presented at a plenary session at the ADA conference, giving a talk entitled "Unveiling a Uniform Front of Pack Nutrition Labeling Program."

**Alice Lichtenstein**, D.Sc., the Stanley N. Gershoff Professor of Nutrition Science and Policy at the Friedman School and director of the cardiovascular nutrition laboratory at the HNRCA, gave a presentation titled "Diet: What Should You Recommend to Your Patients to Reduce Cardiometabolic Risk?" at the 2008 Cardiometabolic Health Congress in Boston.

**Nicola McKeown**, Ph.D., an assistant professor and a scientist at the HNRCA, had her article, "Dietary Magnesium Intake Is Related to Metabolic Syndrome in Elderly Americans," published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. McKeown was asked to serve as a member of the editorial board for the *British Journal of Nutrition*, starting in January 2009. She also gave a presentation on "Whole Grains, Metabolic Syndrome and Diabetes Risk" at the conference "Whole Grains and Beyond—An Opportunity to Discuss Emerging Trends in Nutrition" in Toronto, Canada.

**Simin N. Meydani**, D.V.M., Ph.D., a professor of nutrition and immunology and director of the immunology lab at the HNRCA, was invited to give a presentation on "Immune Function as a Biological Marker to Assess Micronutrient Status" at the Gates Foundation Micronutrients Assessment Meeting in August. She also presented "Antioxidants and Nutritional Intervention in Aging and Age-associated Disease" at the seventh annual Frontiers in Cancer Prevention Research Conference in National Harbor, Md., in November.

**Paul Milbury**, Ph.D., an assistant professor and a scientist in the antioxidant lab at the HNRCA, gave a presentation on "Berry Anthocyanins and Structurally Diverse Phytonutrients in Chronic Disease Prevention" at the 49th annual meeting of the American College of Nutrition in October.

**José Ordovas**, Ph.D., professor and genomics laboratory director at the HNRCA, was appointed a member of the science advisory board of the FDA National Center for Toxicological Research for his expertise in nutrition and genetics. He also received the 15th Carles Martí Henneberg Award to the Scientific Trajectory from the Danone Institute.

**Lara Park**, N09, a longtime dancer and a member of the Tufts dance troupe Sarabande, recently choreographed a dance routine based on the topic of her directed study, "The Role of Folate in Epigenetic Regulation of Colon Carcinogenesis," for a contest called "Dance Your Ph.D." The contest, sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, aims to bring science to a wider audience through the arts. Fellow nutrition students, dance colleagues and even some faculty served as her dance company. Hear what Park, her advisor **Sarah Booth**, Ph.D., director of the Vitamin K Laboratory at the HNRCA, and some of the dancers had to say about the experience of translating science into dance: <http://enews.tufts.edu/stories/1458/2008/11/17/ScienceTakesCenterStage>.

**Helen Rasmussen**, a senior research dietitian in the metabolic research unit at the HNRCA, expects to publish a book chapter titled "HIV in Older Adults" in early 2009 as a part of the volume *Nutrition Management of HIV and AIDS*.

Assistant Professor **Aron Troen**, Ph.D., a scientist in the neuroscience lab at the HNRCA, gave a presentation on "Hot Topic: B-vitamins and Cognition—Is There Breakthrough News?" at the 2008 Friedman School Symposium in September.

While teaching in the EU European Erasmus Mundus program in Food Science, Technology and Nutrition in Belgium and Ireland, Professor **James Tillotson**, Ph.D., was invited in November to give a seminar to the faculty and graduate students at the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester, England. He spoke on the recent run-up in retail food prices, which will also be the subject of an upcoming column of his ("Why Does My Food Suddenly Cost So Much?") in *Nutrition Today*.

### ON THE BOOKSHELF

Professor **Susan Roberts'** new book, *The Instinct Diet* (Workman Publishing Co. Inc.) attempts to bring recent science to the practice of weight loss. Roberts' approach is not to fight our instinctive drives to eat calorie-dense, readily available foods, but to avoid a confrontation with them, using the best strategies she's gleaned from the scientific literature and from 17 years of studying people's metabolisms, cravings, food preferences and responses to different diets as director of the Energy Metabolism Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging. The book will be available in stores December 17.

*Shaping the Humanitarian World* (Routledge) by **Peter Walker**, Ph.D., the Irwin H. Rosenberg Professor of Nutrition and Human Security, and Associate Professor **Daniel Maxwell**, Ph.D., examines how the international community works in response to humanitarian crises and the systems that bind and divide them. By tracing the history of international humanitarian action from its early roots through the birth of the Red Cross to the beginning of the United Nations and into the 21st century, Walker and Maxwell examine the challenges humanitarian agencies face, from working alongside armies and terrorists to witnessing genocide. They argue that humanitarianism has a vital future, but only if those practicing it choose to make it so.

### AWARDS & ACCOLADES

**Christine Framson**, Ph.D., N07, received the Published Research Award in Pediatrics from the Pediatric Nutrition Practice Group, a subspecialty interest group within the American Dietetic Association.

Dean **Eileen Kennedy**, D.Sc.; Professor **Johanna Dwyer**, D.Sc.; and Professor Emeritus **Robert Russell**, M.D., have been designated National Associates of the National Research Council of the National Academies. The designation, which is for life, recognizes their service on study and oversight committees of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine.

### FRIEDMAN FACULTY IN THE NEWS

Hibiscus tea research by Assistant Professor **Diane McKay**, Ph.D., unveiled at the American Heart Association's annual scientific sessions, drew the attention of *HealthDay News*. She found that drinking three cups a day of hibiscus tea (found in most commercial tea blends in

the United States) lowered blood pressure over a six-week period, most significantly among those with the highest blood pressure to begin with. "Even small changes in blood pressure ... when seen in large population studies, will effectively reduce the risk of certain mortalities," she said.

*Eating Well* magazine turned to Professor **José Ordovas**, Ph.D., director of the Nutrition and Genomics Laboratory, for its special report on nutrigenomics. "Dietary recommendations are based on averages across large populations," he said. "What nutritional genomics teaches is there is no one-size-fits-all diet that works for everyone."

Professor **Katherine Tucker**, Ph.D., was interviewed by the internationally broadcast Voice of America radio about her recent study linking bone mineral density and vitamin C intake in elderly men. "The fruits and vegetables provide molecules which help reduce acidity in the blood, which helps reduce bone resorption," Tucker said. Resorption means the breaking down of bone cells to release calcium into the blood.

### MISS THE CAREER PANEL?

On December 2, the Friedman School Alumni Association Executive Council sponsored a career panel that focused on balancing personal and professional life. The participants were **Silvina Choumnekovitch**, N02, a scientist in the Vitamin Metabolism Laboratory of the HNRCA, and **Jeanene Fogli-Cawley**, N06, director of endocrinology, metabolic disease and cardiology at i3 research. **Katya Tsaion**, N99, president, scientific director and chief executive of Apredica, served as moderator. Visit [nutrition.tufts.edu](http://nutrition.tufts.edu) to hear the podcast.

### SAVE THE DATE FOR REUNION

Please mark your calendars for the 7th Annual Friedman School All-Alumni Reunion, April 4–6, 2009. The reunion committee has planned a fantastic weekend that will feature the 2009 Alumni Association Awards, a group service project at the Greater Boston Food Bank, discussions of critical issues in nutrition and the opportunity to reconnect with old friends and mentors. The keynote speaker will be Lorelei DiSogra, vice president of nutrition and health for the United Fresh Produce Association. There will also be a special one-hour reception for Friedman School graduates from the last five years (2003 to 2008) and an all-alumni cocktail party at Vloro Restaurant in Boston. More information is posted at <http://nutrition.tufts.edu/reunion>. Questions? Please email [sean.devendorf@tufts.edu](mailto:sean.devendorf@tufts.edu).

The deadline for the next issue of the *Dean's Letter for Tufts Nutrition* is Wednesday, January 7, 2009. Please send your submissions to Julie Flaherty at [julie.flaherty@tufts.edu](mailto:julie.flaherty@tufts.edu).