UC SANTA BARBARA
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Julie Cohen

Assistant Professor of Chemistry Named a 2014 Searle Scholar

Irene Chen, an assistant professor in UC Santa Barbara's Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, has been selected as a 2014 Searle Scholar. She is the third UCSB recipient in the award's 33-year history. Previous Searle Scholars include Joel Rothman (1992), a professor in the Department of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology (MCDB), and Kathleen Foltz (1994), an associate professor in MCDB.

"I am very honored to be selected as a Searle Scholar," Chen said. "I'm really excited to use the methods that we developed to answer very fundamental questions about the beginnings of life, to explore new directions in biomedical research."

Chen received her B.A. in chemistry from Harvard in 1999, her Ph.D. in biophysics from Harvard, working with Jack Szostak to build primitive cells to study the origin of life, and her M.D. from Harvard/MIT in 2007. She was a Bauer Fellow in systems biology at Harvard from 2007-12, where she began to study information transmission and evolutionary landscapes of the origin of life. She joined the faculty in January 2013.

The Searle Scholars Program supports research of outstanding individuals who have recently begun their appointment at the assistant professor level, and whose appointment is their first tenure-track position at participating academic or research

institutions. Grants are $300,000 for a three-year term with $100,000 payable each year of the grant, subject to the receipt of acceptable progress reports. Generally, the program makes 15 new grants annually.

Since the program’s inception, the award amount has been increased four times, from its initial level of $50,000 per year for three years in 1981 to its current amount of $100,000 per year for three years. The number of institutions invited to participate in the program has also increased over the years and today numbers 155. In total, 527 Searle Scholars have been named and more than $111 million has been awarded.

The program was founded in 1980 and is funded through the Searle Funds at the Chicago Community Trust established by the estates of Mr. and Mrs. John G. Searle. John G. Searle was the grandson of the founder of the worldwide pharmaceutical company, G.D. Searle & Company.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.