



UNIVERSITY of  
NEW ORLEANS

*2014 UNO Research Recognition Prize Winners*

*Research Excellence Prize*

**John B. Wiley, Ph.D.**

Professor of Chemistry

*Early Career Research Prize*

**Malay Ghose Hajra, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering

*Competitive Funding Prize*

**Martin T. O'Connell, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor and Chair of Earth and Environmental Science

**The following three pages contain descriptions of the award winners' efforts that led to their selection, as well as brief descriptions of each prize category.**

# RESEARCH EXCELLENCE PRIZE

## PURPOSE

The Research Excellence Prize is a recognition for persons who have achieved the rank of Associate Professor or Professor and who have distinguished themselves in their creative and scholarly activities.

## 2014 WINNER

*John B. Wiley, Ph.D.* began as an Assistant Professor of Chemistry in 1993. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1999 and to Professor in 2003. In 2005, he received the title of University Research Professor, and in 2012 he has named President's Research Professor. Dr. Wiley has published 116 peer reviewed journal articles. His publications have appeared in top journals such as Journal of the American Chemical Society (JACS), Chemical Communications, Angewandte Chemie-International Edition, Advanced Materials, Chemistry of Materials, Inorganic Chemistry, and Journal of Materials Chemistry. Further his work has been routinely written up in top periodicals – it has been highlighted for example in Materials Today, Nature Nanotechnology, High-Tech Materials Alert, and Institute of Physics' Nanotechweb.org. Additional acclamations have come for his paper "Synthesis of Porous Wires from Directed Assemblies of Spheres," J. Am. Chem. Soc. 2003 where it was one of the top ten "most-accessed" JACS communications in 2003. Dr. Wiley has had numerous and continued grants awarded both as PI and as co-PI. Professor Wiley has been an active and important member of the Advanced Materials Research Institute



(AMRI). As such, he has made considerable contributions to AMRI's success in terms of grant funding, publications, and in building a strong institute. He has also secured numerous Board of Regents Graduate Fellowship grants, allowing the Chemistry Department and the university to increase the number of enrolled and graduating Ph.D. students. Since 2000, Dr. Wiley has had funding via several National Science Foundation (NSF) awards for his work in Topochemical Reaction Strategies. He has also received additional funding through the NSF NIRT program and the NSF ECCS. He has also received extensive funding through DARPA. Dr. Wiley has taken an active role in the Department of Chemistry and AMRI programs to engage young students in research projects. He has hosted several high school and undergraduate research participants since AMRI's summer programs in this area began in 2002. In addition, he frequently hosts undergraduate researchers in his lab during the academic year.

## BENEFITS

The prize consists of the public designation of the prize winner, and a one-time fixed price grant award of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) administered through the Research office. Also, the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and the Provost will work with the winners' chairs and deans to identify external awards and designations for which the winner might be competitive and make efforts to nominate the winner for such awards when possible.

## CRITERIA

Nominees for UNO Research Excellence Prize must be associate or full professors in one of the academic departments. Faculty who have received a Research Excellence Prize in the last five years are not eligible. Selection is based on the candidate's outstanding and sustained record of creative and scholarly activity and on his/her status among experts in the respective field.

## EARLY CAREER RESEARCH PRIZE

### PURPOSE

The UNO Early Career Research Prize is a recognition for persons who hold the rank of Assistant Professor at the time of their award, and who have distinguished themselves in their creative and scholarly activities.

### 2014 WINNER

*Malay Ghose Hajra, Ph.D.* joined the Civil and Environmental Engineering department as a full-time Assistant Professor in Fall 2011. Since then, he has been actively involved in extensive research activities in the areas of geotechnical and geo-environmental engineering. Dr. Ghose Hajra has secured multiple external research



grants from local and regional agencies, including Louisiana Transportation Research Center (LTRC), Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), and Louisiana Board of Regents. His recent grants include: “Study of sedimentation characteristics of dredged sediment using column settling test apparatus,” “Characterization of Dredged sediment used in Louisiana coastal restoration and marsh creation projects,” “Comparative evaluation of pile set up and axial capacity of driven piles installed using

impact hammer versus vibratory pile driving equipment,” “Laboratory evaluation of subsurface soil for coastal restoration projects,” and “Laboratory evaluation of organic clay and peat soil characteristics and their significance in levee construction and coastal restoration projects,” Dr. Ghose Hajra also encourages undergraduate students to participate in these research activities. Under his supervision, several undergraduate students have published research findings in conference proceedings and given presentations to a professional audience. The results obtained from his research findings are also incorporated in his undergraduate and graduate courses, thereby adding value in classroom teaching and ensuring state-of-the-art knowledge for our students. Dr. Ghose Hajra has authored several technical papers in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings. He is an active member of the ASCE Geotechnical Engineering Geology and Site Characterization Committee and on the Driven Piles and Sustainability technical committees with Deep Foundation Institute (DFI). As the chair of the Academic Committee at the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI), he oversees the development of sustainability related course materials and student credential requirements. Dr. Ghose Hajra also acts as faculty advisor to American Concrete Institute (ACI) – UNO and Engineers without Borders (EWB) – UNO chapters.

### BENEFITS

The prize consists of the public designation of the prize winner, and a one-time fixed price grant award of seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500) administered through the Research office. Also, the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and the Provost will work with the winners’ chairs and deans to identify external awards and designations for which the winner might be competitive and make efforts to nominate the winner for such awards when possible.

### CRITERIA

Nominees for the UNO Early Career Research Prize must be assistant professors at the time of the award in one of the academic departments and must have passed their third-year review. Faculty who have received a prior Early Career Research Prize are not eligible. Selection is based on the candidate's outstanding record of creative and scholarly activity.

## COMPETITIVE FUNDING PRIZE

### PURPOSE

The Competitive Funding Prize is a recognition for the UNO researcher who, as a Principal Investigator (PI), has achieved the highest of amount of competitive external funding awards in the past fiscal year.

### 2014 WINNER

*Martin “Marty” O’Connell, Ph.D.* is Chair of the Earth and Environmental Science department in addition to being a prolific and accomplished researcher with an active lab in the Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences (PIES). Dr. O’Connell had over \$700k in additional funding added to his portfolio of existing grants this year. His grant “Abundance and Distribution of Commercially Important Estuarine Dependent Species Populations within the Gulf of Mexico” is a federal award from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to assess the Gulf of Mexico blue crab, white shrimp, and brown shrimp; this study will provide a better understanding of the population dynamics of these important species. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation sponsored Dr. O’Connell’s work entitled, “Cooperative Research and Development of Turtle Excluder Devices for the Louisiana Skimmer Trawl Shrimp Fishery.” This award creates pilot initiative to address the negative perceptions regarding the use, utilization, and design of Turtle Excluder Devices. The project has a robust collaboration of fishermen, Coastal Community Consulting, National Marine Fisheries Service, and UNO. “Habitat Suitability Index Model Development - Wildlife, Fish and Shellfish” is sponsored by the Water Institute of the Gulf and has two main foci: (1) improving/developing HSI models for six wildlife species: brown pelicans, three water fowl species (mottled duck, green-winged teal, and gadwall), wild-caught crawfish, and alligator, and (2) improvements/development of HSI models or other standardized equations for a variety of fish/shellfish species. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries funded “Tracking Lake Pontchartrain Bull Sharks: Where do they and their prey occur?” to identify hot spots of bull sharks and their prey in Lake Pontchartrain. They hope to learn if this apex predator stays in the lake all year, or only during warmer months. The results have implications regarding proposed hurricane protection structures.



### BENEFITS

The prize consists of the public designation of the prize winner, and a one-time fixed price grant award of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) administered through the Research office.

### CRITERIA

External awards for all competitive project grants are considered; administrative and institutional program grants are not considered. The calculation is based on the official award notice of finalized budget from the sponsor(s) in the prior fiscal year. Multiple awards to the same PI are added together to determine the value used for the prize determination.