Press Releases: U.S. Department of State Awards U.S. ASPIRE Prize to Personalized Medicine Scientist

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

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The U.S. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Science Prize for Innovation, Research, and Education (ASPIRE) Competition named Dr. Kara Spiller of Drexel University as the 2018 U.S. nominee to represent the United States for the APEC-wide ASPIRE Prize.

ASPIRE is an annual award hosted by the APEC Policy Partnership for Science, Technology, and Innovation (PPSTI) that recognizes young scientists from APEC economies who have demonstrated a commitment to both excellence in scientific research, as evidenced by scholarly publication, and cooperation with scientists from other APEC member economies. ASPIRE, as well as the competition for the U.S. ASPIRE nominee, is co-sponsored by Wiley and Elsevier, publishers of scholarly scientific knowledge and coordinated by the U.S. Department of State. The winner of the APEC-wide competition will receive a cash prize of $25,000 and will be announced at the August meeting of PPSTI in Papua New Guinea.

An emerging leader in immune engineering and personalized medicine, Dr. Spiller was selected because of her innovative research on the design of “smart” biomaterials that can control the behavior of innate immune cells to promote tissue repair and wound healing. She developed a point-of-care diagnostic to tailor optimal treatment for patients based on the state of their immune system, depending on factors such as age, genetics, and nutrition. Her work has been published in journals including Biomaterials, Journal of Investigative Dermatology, Blood, Immunobiology, and the Journal of Neuroscience.

While only one nominee can be put forward from the United States to compete for the broader ASPIRE prize, the U.S. nominee and three runner-ups will be celebrated at a public lecture roundtable with government officials, and a U.S. award ceremony in Washington, DC, later this year. Runners-up for the 2018 U.S. ASPIRE prize include:

Dr. Jordan Green, Associate Professor at Johns Hopkins University, a world leader in gene therapy and the use of biodegradable particles to teach the immune system to recognize cancer cells.

Dr. Manu Prakash, Assistant Professor of Bioengineering at Stanford University, is a designer of novel techniques to deliver health solutions in the world's most resource poor conditions.

Dr. Jorge M. Zuniga, Assistant Professor of Biomechanics at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, is the creator of the first open source 3D printed hand prosthesis for children in the United States named Cyborg Beast.

For more information, please contact OES-PA-DG@state.gov.