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Iota Sigma Pi 2019 Morgan Research Award Goes to Prof. Leslie Hicks of University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

Iota Sigma Pi, the national organization for women in chemistry, has selected Prof. Leslie Hicks to receive the ***Agnes Fay Morgan Research Award***. The award is given for research achievement to a woman chemist or biochemist not over forty years of age. She has been invited to participate in the organization's Triennial Convention in 2020.



Dr. Hicks is currently an associate professor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill (UNC–CH) and under her leadership, her research group has developed a new method that allows one to screen and identify bioactive peptides that have antimicrobial or anti-cancer activity. The results of her research will have a wide-ranging impact on fighting antibiotic resistance and developing new chemotherapeutic agents to target cancerous cells.

The other focus of Hicks' research is a long-standing problem in biofuels development: the decoupling of algal growth from biodiesel production. (Algae may be manipulated to produce the precursors to biodiesel, but this causes their growth to cease — preventing this cessation is an important objective of biofuels research.) Hicks' skills and knowledge of mass spectrometry and proteomics have helped her group make significant contributions to solving this puzzle.

To date, she has been co-author on 62 publications, which have collectively been cited almost 3,400 times — a testament to the importance of the science that she has produced so far. Dr. Hicks has been recognized nationally for her achievements in chemistry — this is clearly evidenced by her numerous publications, awards and honors, and grants received.

Dr. Hicks nominators cited her personal qualities, as well as her research achievements, as reasons for her nomination. “In addition to publishing significant research for the advancement of anti-microbial agents, Dr. Hicks is committed to increasing opportunities for underrepresented students in science, including both women and minorities. She frequently invites undergraduate students to take on meaningful roles in ongoing research... She pairs significant research achievements in analytical chemistry with an unwavering dedication to student mentorship. Dr. Hicks uses her success to the benefit of graduate and undergraduate students alike, ensuring that underrepresented students are empowered to advance in science either by direct mentorship or through collaborations with other universities.”

Dr. Hicks received a BS in Chemistry *summa cum laude* from Marshall University, Huntington, WV. As a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, she made important contributions to chemistry and co-authored several high-profile publications while earning her PhD. Next she became the Director of Proteomics and Mass Spectrometry at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center at Washington University in St. Louis. She continued with an appointment as an assistant member and principle investigator of the Center (2006–2013), while also serving as an adjunct professor in the Department of Biology. She is now a tenured faculty member in the Department of Chemistry at UNC–CH.

IOTA SIGMA PI is a national honor society for women in chemistry. Its major objectives are to promote interest in chemistry among women students, to foster mutual advancement in academic, business, and social life; and to stimulate personal accomplishment in chemical fields. IOTA SIGMA PI serves to promote the advancement of women in chemistry by granting recognition to women who have demonstrated superior scholastic achievement and high professional competence by election into IOTA SIGMA PI. www.iotasigmapi.info