April 24, 2018 -- Please join the Institute for Bioscience and Biotechnology (IBBR) in congratulating Tsega Solomon, a graduate student in Dr. John Orban’s laboratory, who has received the 2018-2019 Dr. Mabel S. Spencer Award for Excellence in Graduate Achievement for her work on temperature-dependent protein fold switches. The award is given each year to just one UMCP graduate student campus-wide and carries a stipend of $15,000 and candidacy tuition remission.

The Dr. Mabel S. Spencer Award for Excellence in Graduate Achievement was established to support an outstanding graduate student who has demonstrated both academic excellence and the potential to make a contribution in his/her field of Study. Dr. Mabel S. Spencer was a former distinguished professor in the College of Education at the University of Maryland, College Park, where she taught from 1948 through 1968. First in her family to attend college, Dr. Spencer then assisted her younger siblings to obtain their college degrees. Each of her four daughters graduated from the University of Maryland.

Dr. Spencer was a dynamic, energetic person known for her leadership in effecting positive change. The Spencer Award recognizes her dedicated service as an educator,
her contributions to the campus community, and the legacy of high standards and personal integrity that she left to all who knew her.

“Tsega is richly deserving of this award,” said Dr. Orban, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, University of Maryland, and Principal Investigator at IBBR. “Her enlightening work on temperature-dependent protein fold switches will attract broad interest in the protein biophysics community, and may even have practical applications. These designed proteins have significant shape-shifting properties that can be tuned over a relatively narrow temperature range. Tsega’s work in this area is relevant to the design of novel protein-based drugs and also has implications for understanding how new protein topologies evolve, and how mutations are interpreted in human disease.”

“IBBR is committed to providing a challenging and innovational research environment and to fostering high achievement among our graduate assistants. It is immensely gratifying to see Tsega’s accomplishments recognized through this prestigious award and an impressive reflection of Dr. Orban’s mentorship, as well,” noted IBBR Director, Dr. Thomas Fuerst.

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