University of Maryland iGEM team, co-advised by IBBR Fellow, Dr. Edward Eisenstein, brings home a gold medal for their innovative plastic waste bioremediation and degradation measurement project

*It takes about 450 years for a plastic bottle to break down in nature, but with the UMD “PETNET” team’s new technology, this time could potentially be cut to as little as 2 weeks. The team also developed an efficient and economical system to measure degradation.*

News reports and environmental advocacy group websites are filled with pleas to consumers and industry to curb the use of disposable, single-use plastics that result in massive pollution and toxicity issues for the global environment. A team of 12 University of Maryland students, calling themselves PETNET, (after polyethylene terephthalate, or PET -- the world's most commonly used plastic), recently earned a gold medal at this year’s International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) synthetic biology competition for their scalable, plastic bioremediation approach using a “plastic-eating enzyme” and their low-cost fluorescent biosensor system to measure PET degradation. [Find the full story here.](https://www.ibbr.umd.edu)