

## Claire Fraser Named the Inaugural Dean's Endowed Professor

**Claire Fraser**, PhD, was presented with the inaugural Dean's Endowed Professorship in the School of Medicine on December 7, 2015. The ceremony, which took place in Westminster Hall, also honored **Robert E. Fischell**, ScD, and his wife **Susan R. Fischell** for their generous support. The couple funded the professorship but chose not to put it in their names.

Endowed professorships provide faculty with critical resources needed to sustain and expand promising research, launch innovative clinical initiatives, and educate and train future physicians. The University of Maryland School of Medicine has more than 70 endowed chairs and professorships. Faculty members such as Dr. Fraser are crucial to helping the School of Medicine maintain high standards in research and patient care.

"It is because of endowed professorships like this that we can recruit faculty members of great significance to these positions, which continues a tradition going back 500 years," said **E. Albert Reece**, MD, PhD, MBA, Vice President for Medical Affairs, University of Maryland, and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and Dean of the School of Medicine. "The talented faculty members who hold endowed chairs and professorships inspire our students, advance the frontiers of knowledge, and make discoveries that change people's lives."

Dr. Fraser, a Professor of Medicine and Microbiology & Immunology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UM SOM), is Director of the Institute for Genome Sciences, which she helped establish at UM SOM in 2007, at the behest of Dean Reece. "I think we've delivered on the promise to make the University of Maryland School of Medicine one of the leading institutions in the field of genomics," Dr. Fraser said.

Dr. Fraser, who was previously the President and Director of The Institute for Genomic Research (TIGR) in Rockville, MD, has played a seminal role in the sequencing and analysis of human, animal, plant and microbial genomes to better understand the role that genes play in development, evolution, physiology and disease. She led the teams that first sequenced the genomes of several microbial organisms, including important human and animal pathogens, and as a consequence helped to initiate the era of comparative genomics. Her current research interests are focused on the structure and function of the human gut microbiota.

Dr. Fraser has more than 240 scientific publications, and has been cited in other scientific papers more than 50,000 times. She has served on committees of the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy and National Institutes of Health. She is the recipient of numerous awards and honors including the Promega Biotechnology Award and the E.O. Lawrence Award from the Department of Energy, she is a Fellow of AAAS and the American Association of Microbiology, and she has been elected into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and the National Academy of Medicine.

Dr. Fischell is a physicist, inventor and holder of more than 200 U.S. and foreign patents on medical devices and spacecraft. With the active assistance of his wife Susan, his inventions have led to the creation of several biotechnology companies. These inventions include a rechargeable implantable pacemaker that can be programmed with radio waves (Pacesetter Systems, Inc., now St. Jude Medical), which he and his team later helped miniaturize, to save even more lives; the implantable insulin pump (now a product of Medtronic MiniMed); numerous coronary stents used to open clogged arteries (IsoStent, Inc., which merged with Cordis, a Johnson & Johnson company); and two feedback systems that provide early warning signs of both epileptic seizures (NeuroPace, Inc.) and heart attacks (Angel Medical Systems, Inc.). In

2005, Dr. Fischell was awarded a \$100,000 TED prize to pursue his work on the design of a device to cure migraines without medication. That device (eNeura, Inc.) received FDA approval in May 2014. Dr. Fischell also was a co-inventor on a device to treat epilepsy that received FDA approval in November 2013.

“I am honored to be the inaugural recipient of the Dean’s Endowed Professorship,” said Dr. Fraser. “Dr. Fischell, particularly, is inspired by a pioneering spirit, something he has obviously leveraged multiple times, first to usher in the modern era of space satellites in his former career, and now to invent multiple life-saving devices. Perhaps he and I will find a project on which we can collaborate. I would like to think that between the two of us we could bring all the elements of success to the table.”