

NEW HIRE



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## Stougaard takes helm of research facilities

Named the new assistant dean for research for the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences in March, Robert Stougaard is responsible for the overall supervision of the college's seven research centers and farms and three major agricultural experiment stations located across the state.

"We are fortunate to have someone with Bob Stougaard's depth of experience to manage our extensive network of research stations and farms throughout Georgia," said Allen Moore, CAES associate dean for research. "Our research network is vital to Georgia agriculture and allows us to conduct research that is climate- and soil-specific to the numerous growing conditions in a state this size."

UGA Cooperative Extension specialists use the field and laboratory research conducted at the college's experiment stations and research and education centers to educate and train Georgia agriculturists.

Stougaard earned his bachelor's degree in soil science from the University of Wisconsin in 1978 and his master's degree in weed science from Southern Illinois University in 1983. He earned his doctorate in weed science from the University of Nebraska, where he also minored in microbiology.

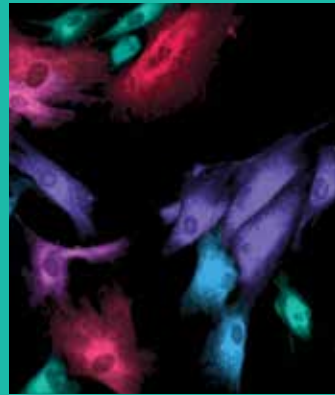
He joined the faculty at the University of Nebraska in 1987, and his primary duties focused on weed science Extension efforts in agronomic crops. In 1991, Stougaard moved to Montana State University and the Northwestern Agricultural Research Center near Kalispell, Montana, where he rose to the position of professor with tenure. At Montana State, his areas of responsibility included weed science research and small-grain cultivar evaluations.

"We look forward to the wealth of knowledge and fresh perspective Bob will bring to our research program and how he will help us best serve Georgia in the future," Moore said. • Faith Peppers



STOUGAARD

▼ These Mesenchymal stem cell (MSC) donor populations are part of the CMaT project.



COURTESY OF MORTENSEN LAB

**T**hrough hundreds of clinical trials, researchers discover the potential of cell therapies to remedy diseases like cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer's

disease. Driven by a new generation of treatment, these cell-based therapeutics are living entities that can regenerate and repair organs and tissues and affect the course of disease.

However, production and standardization of these living cells is costly. In research laboratories and hospitals nationwide, therapeutic cells are often processed in small, nonuniform batches, an expensive, time-consuming process with a limited capacity to service the large number of people who could potentially benefit from these treatments.

Researchers at the University of Georgia's Regenerative Bioscience Center (RBC), led by Steven Stice, Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar and D.W. Brooks Distinguished Professor in the UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, are working to change the levels of efficiency required to create these cell therapies in an effort to make them more affordable and accessible.



## UGA researchers collaborate to advance cell-based therapies

In late December 2017, Stice orchestrated UGA's part in a successful bid for \$20 million in funding from the National Science Foundation to establish the Engineering Research Center for Cell Manufacturing Technologies (CMaT) in partnership with peer institutions. At CMaT, the RBC research team and other UGA engineering faculty will work closely with industry and clinical facilities to develop transformative tools and

technologies for consistent, scalable, low-cost production of quality, living therapeutic cells.

This regional manufacturing hub, based at the Georgia Institute of Technology thanks in part to a gift of \$16 million from the Atlanta-based Marcus Foundation, could create a pipeline of therapies and cures for an aging population challenged by escalating chronic diseases.

CMaT's major partners also include the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus as well as affiliate institutions, international academic partners, bioindustry leaders, and U.S. laboratories.

"What we see is an opportunity to bring a diverse group of scientists, clinicians, engineers and industrial partners to the forefront of the drive to find new, innovative solutions for patients suffering from diseases for which there is currently no known cure," Stice said.

CMaT research has three primary goals: advance innovations and new tools for cell-based therapies, develop regulatory guidelines for commercial scalability, and launch a workforce development initiative.

"Everything we do centers on bringing together the educational and biomedical community to accelerate workforce training initiatives statewide and beyond," Stice said. • Charlene Betourney