

## **Tulane researchers awarded \$4 million to study oil's effects on Gulf**

November 24, 2015 1:00 AM Carolyn Scofield  
cscofiel@tulane.edu  
504-247-1443

Proposals from three Tulane University researchers are among 22 being funded by the latest Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative ([GoMRI](#)) program. More than \$4 million will be awarded to scientists in the School of Science and Engineering, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies.

[Vijay John](#), the Leo S. Weil Professor of Engineering at Tulane, is principal investigator of a project to improve dispersants, which help break up oil into small droplets. The research team received \$1.2 million to develop different materials that will better work to disperse weathered oil and high viscosity crudes.

An award of \$1.5 million will fund research headed by Tulane toxicologist [Charles Miller](#). Miller's team seeks to identify the most toxic compounds in fresh and aged crude oil that leaked from the Macondo well.

"We hope to better understand the environmental and human health risks of oil by identifying these specific toxic chemicals, their relative amounts and how long they persist in the environment," says Miller.

Tulane ecologist [Sunshine Van Bael](#) and her team received nearly \$1.6 million to study how bacteria living in plant roots may help break down oil. The researchers hope to find ways to inoculate plants with oil-degrading bacteria and have the bacteria delivered by plant roots to buried pockets of oil.

BP established the GoMRI, an independent, 10-year research program, in 2010 following the Deepwater Horizon explosion. The company committed \$500 million to investigate the effect of oil spills on the environment and public health.