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momentUM ncrc newsletter



Researchers across U-M schools coming together at NCRC to collaborate on translational research is an idea that is now a reality, as evidenced by the move of the Krebsbach lab from the Dental School.

Research capacity continues to grow at NCRC. A group of social scientists are engaged in an innovative research project on our site - studying our researchers to learn how physical proximity impacts research collaborations.

We are delighted to announce that a large team of researchers from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Ann Arbor Healthcare System will move to NCRC in the coming year, as part of a new partnership.

[David Canter](#), Executive Director, NCRC

Have you seen the new NCRC annual report? ar.umncrc.org

NCRC at the Crossroads of Interdisciplinary Research

U-M Dental School faculty member joins Biointerfaces Institute at NCRC

In a recent interview, [**Paul H. Krebsbach**](#), DDS, PhD, Biologic & Materials Sciences Professor and Chair, U-M School of Dentistry, shares how the unique features of NCRC will impact the nature of his research



L to R: Lauren Azzopardi, Luis Villa, Wilbur Tong, Yaseen Elkasabi, Hao Chen, Jinkoo Kim (center), Feng Zhu, Paul Krebsbach, Hongli Sun, Xu Qian

Please tell us about your move to NCRC and your participation in the Biointerfaces Institute.

I was on the original committee with Professor Jeorg Lahann to come up with the concepts for the Biointerfaces Institute, so I've been involved with the planning efforts since the early stages. It is exciting for me as a biologist to be surrounded by a range of researchers at NCRC - some with similar interests but more interestingly, others with very different interests. To me the beauty of discovery is putting people with seemingly unrelated interests together to enhance the process of discovery. This is the process that interests me most and now it's a reality. So far the experience has been very good!

Do you already work with some of the faculty members located at NCRC?

I have worked with a few of them in the past, but since moving here I have had new interactions. For example, I have already had discussions with Professors Shu Takayama and Jeorg Lahann in substantial ways. I am confident that being at NCRC and having our labs next to each other's will only accelerate the collaborations. In the past their labs were in North Campus and mine in Central Campus, making interactions more difficult. I see great benefits from this co-location. Having our PhD students and post-docs working elbow to elbow with those from other labs will greatly enhance the research potential.

Have you done interdisciplinary research in the past?

Yes, certainly. In fact, my career at Michigan is built on the idea of inter-disciplinary research. I have been engaged in interactive science for the last 15 years. We have at least three biomedical engineering faculty members in our department in the Dental School, so I am used to an inter-disciplinary research culture. I have had a long history of interactions between the physical sciences and the life sciences, and bringing the two together. I anticipate building on this in significant ways at NCRC.

What do you see as the unique features of NCRC?

Well, it's certainly a very pleasant environment! After 15 years on Central Campus, the change in the environment - art, trees and scenery are all very refreshing, although I do like being in the Dental School as well.

In terms of research, the laboratories are very well-structured. I like the open anatomy and layout of the labs and the common areas, all of which make it easy to communicate and collaborate with people. The Dental School doesn't have similar labs although some of the newer buildings on campus, such as the BSRB and the LSI do. The open structure of the labs here is new to me but I look forward to getting used to it quickly. I do think this structure makes a lot of sense for inter-disciplinary scientific research.

And finally, I am very interested in and hopeful of making new connections at NCRC. Let me give you an example. As I mentioned, we were already working with engineers at the Dental School, but NCRC makes more possible. Within just two weeks of our moving here, two of my post-docs came to me with a proposal to work with cancer stem cell researchers who are working down the hall from us. The post-docs were invited to their lab meeting to talk about their work and interactions have begun. Clearly, being at NCRC has facilitated the exploration of collaborations that we may not even have thought of three months ago. I think such connections will continue to

evolve at a fast pace at NCRC. I am anticipating a wealth of opportunities.

NCRC gives me a new outlook and freshness to my science without having to leave this university. I don't have to leave my old collaborators – I can now make new ones.

Social Sciences Research at NCRC Publishes First Report

Sharing space: proximity breeds collaboration



NCRC was one of the three sites for a two year study funded by the [U-M Office of the Vice President for Research](#), the [U-M Institute for Social Research \(ISR\)](#), and the [U-M Medical School](#) to assess collaboration and physical proximity.

For the study, the research team conducted surveys of 172 faculty and research staff members in three U-M buildings, and also used extensive administrative data. The conclusion is that when researchers share a building, and especially a floor, the likelihood of forming new collaborations and obtaining funding increases dramatically.

"Our analyses clearly show that there are benefits to co-location," said [Jason Owen-Smith](#), an associate professor of sociology and organizational studies. Researchers who occupy the same building are 33 percent more likely to form new collaborations than researchers who occupy different buildings, and scientists who occupy the same floor are 57 percent more likely to form new collaborations than investigators who occupy different buildings.

"This study gives insights into the benefits that such research brings and how interdisciplinarity, which is now at the forefront of scientific enquiry, is supported by such hubs as the North Campus Research Complex that brings researchers from many different disciplines into contact," said [Stephen Forrest](#), U-M vice president for research.

Owen-Smith and colleagues found that linear distance between labs and offices was less important than overlap in daily walking paths, thus developing the concept of zonal overlap.

VA Research Presence at NCRC Grows

New partnership between NCRC and VA strengthens ties

Research to improve the health of the nation's veterans, and all Americans, will soon get a boost when a large team of researchers from the [Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\) Ann Arbor Healthcare System](#) moves to the University of Michigan campus.

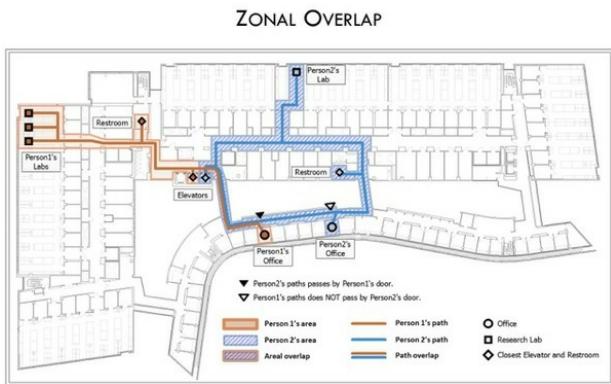
The move will bring a total of 150 VA health researchers closer to their U-M colleagues, making it easier for all of them to study health issues that affect veterans and non-veterans alike, and to test new ideas for improving care in heart disease, diabetes, mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder and more. The signing of a lease for 24,600 square feet of space at U-M's [North Campus Research Complex](#) (NCRC) strengthens VA's already strong ties with U-M.

Almost all of the core researchers in the group that is moving -- the [Ann Arbor VA Center for Clinical Management Research](#) (CCMR) -- have joint faculty appointments at the U-M Medical School, School of Public Health or School of Nursing. Many of the VA researchers are key members of the new U-M [Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation](#) (IHPI), which includes more than 400 researchers from U-M and beyond. The newly leased space is in the institute's building at NCRC.



"We've always worked closely with U-M, but this move will accelerate the pace of research, for the benefit of veterans and patients everywhere," says Eve Kerr, M.D., MPH, director of the VA CCMR and a professor of internal medicine at U-M. "From improving treatment of chronic conditions to preventing suicides and enhancing hospital care, all of us are eager to make an impact on care through research."

The VA CCMR is



The research team found that for every 100 feet of zonal overlap, collaborations increased by 20 percent and grant funding increased between 21 and 30 percent.

"With roughly 30 buildings of differing sizes and layouts, NCRC will especially benefit from the application of zonal overlap -- because it is robust to the effects of spatial layout -- to calibrate the impact of space on collaboration and innovation processes," said Felichism Kabo, a co-author of the report.

Other members of the study team are U-M researchers Felichism Kabo, Margaret Levenstein, Richard Price, Gerald Davis, Yongha Hwang and Natalie Cotton Nessler. A full report of the study is [here](#) and a [link](#) to the ISR news release.



supported by more than \$18 million in competitively awarded VA and other research funding, and is one of only 14 [Centers of Excellence](#) funded through the [VA Health Services Research and Development Service](#) in the nation.

The center includes the Serious Mental Illness Treatment Resource and Evaluation Center, which has made important discoveries related to suicidal thinking and suicide among veterans, and the Diabetes Quality Enhancement Research Initiative, which studies a disease that is at epidemic levels among both veterans and non-veterans.

The move also includes researchers in several programs already jointly run by U-M and VA, including the Patient Safety Enhancement Program, the Center for Bioethics and Social Sciences in Medicine, and the Program on Quality Improvement for Complex Chronic Conditions.

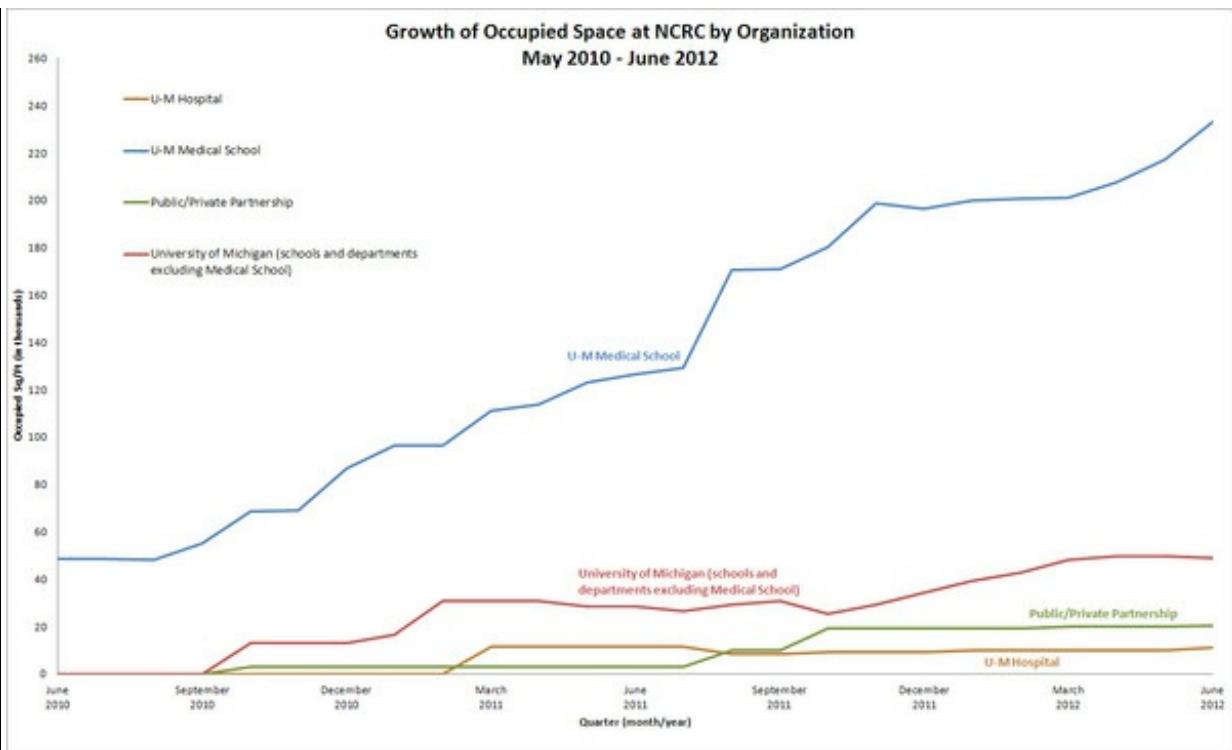
The extensive ties between U-M and the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System stretch back decades, and have helped attract numerous physician-researchers to Ann Arbor.

The full news release is available [here](#).

NCRC Metric: Indicators of Progress



NCRC now has representation from 10 different U-M schools and the U-M Hospital. In addition, there are 19 start-up companies in the Venture Accelerator and two private companies.



This chart shows the growth in occupied space at NCRC over time, broken into four main categories:

1. U-M Medical School
2. The University of Michigan (various schools and departments excluding the Medical School)
3. Public-private partnerships
4. U-M Hospital.

The medical school has seen the highest rate of growth. As the number of inter-disciplinary programs has grown, University of Michigan (schools and departments excluding the Medical School) as a category has also seen growth during the course of the last year.

Pat Holden
Tel: (734) 936-3387
Fax: (510) 765-4321
Email: holdenp@umich.edu

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NCRC Marketing and Communications
2800 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-2800
US

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