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Microbiology to be explored at Townsend Lecture Nov. 4

Dr. Carole A. Heilman, Director of Microbiology and Infectious Disease for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), will deliver the College of Arts and Sciences annual Townsend Lecture Wednesday, Nov. 4.

The lecture will take place at 7:30 p.m. in the My Carolina Alumni Association Center (900 Senate Street). The event is free and open to the public. Heilman's presentation titled, "Intersecting Societies: Our Relationship with the Microbial World", will focus on ways in which researchers are now discovering how changes in the human microbiome can affect health in various ways.

Heilman will examine the complex relationship with the microbial world by sharing some examples of innovative research projects that are helping educate more about the societies of humans and microbes. She will discuss how disturbances such as infection or antibiotics can affect our health and the microbial balance in our bodies.

"Humans and microbes are inextricably linked in a number of ways, and these connections can both help and harm us," said Heilman. "Each microbe has its own unique complement of genes, and together those microbial genes make up the human microbiome."

Heilman has played an important role in directing NIAID's efforts in research in the areas of malaria, influenza, biodefense, tuberculosis and emerging infectious diseases including Ebola. She was awarded two HHS Secretary Awards for Distinguished Service for her work on the pertussis vaccine and AIDS vaccine development. In 2011, she received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

The Townsend Lecture is made possible by the late Dr. J. Ives Townsend, '41, in honor of his parents Joel Ives Townsend, '11 and Emma Chiles Cothran Townsend, and grandparents Robert Wallace Townsend who attended USC in 1883-1884 and Amelia Dalton Carter Townsend.

For more information on the lecture, call 803-777-9201.

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