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## **Center for Nutrition Assistance Research To Enhance Food Security and Dietary Quality**

### ***USDA Awards New RIDGE Center to Partnership of Tufts and UConn***

**Medford, Mass./Hartford, Conn.** - A new center at Tufts University and the University of Connecticut will focus on economic research aimed at enhancing food security and dietary quality for low-income Americans through the nation's nutrition assistance programs.

The research center brings together the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts and the UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, two institutions with long records of research leadership in this area.

The Tufts/University of Connecticut RIDGE (Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics) Center will be funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (for one grant cycle immediately and potentially up to 3 grant cycles in total).

Parke Wilde, associate professor at the Friedman School, will serve as the RIDGE Center Director, and Tatiana Andreyeva, associate professor in the UConn Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, and Director of Economic Initiatives for the UConn Rudd Center, will be the RIDGE Center Associate Director.

"Nutrition assistance programs have a central role in making sure all Americans have access to sufficient – and sufficiently healthy – food for their families," Wilde said. "This Tufts/UConn RIDGE Center will help build the diverse network of researchers needed to study what these programs do and how they can do it more efficiently."

"The new center will offer competitive small-scale grants to support innovative research on nutrition assistance programs. The center's mission is to further strengthen and expand the research community through vigorous outreach, mentoring and networking with established scholars and promising new talent in the field," Andreyeva said. "We will aim to fund a diverse group of experienced and

emerging researchers, representing a range of backgrounds, disciplines and regions of the country.”

The RIDGE Center will issue a request for proposals in early 2017. Applicants will be invited to submit short concept letters in early spring, and selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposals in late spring. Details will be posted online at: <http://ridge.nutrition.tufts.edu>.

The new RIDGE Center funding offers an exciting opportunity for a diversity of new and experienced researchers in the area of nutrition assistance, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), child nutrition programs, and smaller, less studied programs such as the Summer Food Service Program. The Center will help connect researchers from around the country to current information about USDA program and policy interests, offering promise for sound research with real-world usefulness.

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