

## Ethics and Agri-food Nanotechnology Grant Awarded

Nine MSU faculty members working through the Institute for Food and Agricultural Standards have been awarded a National Science Foundation Nanotechnology Interdisciplinary Research Teams grant to study the social and ethical implications of this important new technology for agriculture and the food system. The project entitled “Building Capacity for Social and Ethical Research and Education in Agrifood Nanotechnology,” was funded for four years at a total of \$1,720,000 (NSF Award Number SES-0403847). The lead P.I. and team leader for the project is Paul B. Thompson, W.K. Kellogg Professor of Agricultural, Food and Community Ethics. The project will intertwine three broad objectives:

- 1) Deriving lessons from the social conflict over agrifood biotechnology that may be useful to the entire range of researchers engaged in the new nanotechnology initiative;
- 2) Building a new multi-disciplinary competence among a team comprising senior researchers with extensive experience in social and ethical issues associated with agrifood technology, senior researchers who have collaborated to develop communication strategies in engineering applications, and relatively junior researchers starting research programs in social and economic dimensions of agrifood science; and
- 3) Identifying the most likely applications of nanotechnology within the agrifood sector (including food distribution and consumption), and developing a proactive strategy for understanding and addressing social and ethical issues associated with them.

Key project activities will include three workshops on issues critical to the emergence and success of nanotechnology within the food system, a web outlet that will make findings and links available to the public, training of students at the graduate and undergraduate level, and a multi-disciplinary course on the social and ethical dimensions of nanotechnology in agriculture and the food system. The team will also conduct a roaming monthly seminar to involve a wide range of faculty and students at Michigan State University.