While the move did not change her area of research, Cao has found herself tasked with a new job at the University of Maryland – she’s now a teacher and a mentor. “The fun part is interacting with young students,” Cao said. In her capacity as a mentor, Cao feels that certain traits are shared by most successful researchers and scientists. “I think you have to be smart, have a strong interest in science, and work hard…,” Cao said. “Creativity…is also important.” However, she explained that, despite said qualities, there are many pathways to being a good researcher. Above all, Cao emphasized the importance of staying interested in science.

For Cao, “the freedom...of pursuing the scientific questions that most interest me” excites and motivates her to continue investigating cellular mechanisms in HGPS in the hopes of finding answers to the questions that could help the daily life and health of people everywhere.