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Moving HAIRS: Towards adaptive, homeostatic materials

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Dynamic structures that respond reversibly to changes in their environment are central to self-regulating thermal and lighting systems, targeted drug delivery, sensors, and self-propelled locomotion. Since an adaptive change requires energy input, an ideal strategy would be to design materials that harvest energy directly from the environment and use it to drive an appropriate response. This lecture will present the design of a novel class of reconfigurable materials that use surfaces bearing arrays of nanostructures put in motion by environment-responsive gels. Their unique hybrid architecture, and chemical and mechanical properties can be optimized to confer a wide range of adaptive behaviors. Using both experimental and modeling approaches, we are developing these hydrogel-actuated integrated responsive systems (HAIRS) as new materials with reversible optical and wetting properties, as a multifunctional platform for controlling cell differentiation and function, and as a first homeostatic system with autonomous self-regulation.