

New Institutional Development Awards for Health-Related Research

NCRR is providing funds — up to an estimated \$64 million — to establish six new Institutional Development Awards (IDeA) over the next five years. These awards support multidisciplinary centers — each concentrating on one general area of research — that strengthen institutional biomedical research capability and enhance research infrastructure. Designed to improve the competitiveness of investigators in states that historically have not received significant levels of competitive NIH research funding, the IDeA program supports the following new centers:

- University of Hawaii at Manoa — to study reproductive biology;
- University of Kentucky — to identify mechanisms linking the epidemic of obesity to cardiovascular disease;
- University of Louisville Research Foundation, Inc. — to study the cardiovascular causes and consequences of diabetes and obesity;
- University of Nebraska Medical Center — to research nanomedicine, drug delivery, therapeutics and diagnostics;
- The Mind Research Network, a non-profit research organization in Albuquerque, N.M. — to study the neural mechanisms of schizophrenia; and
- Montana State University — to study cellular mechanisms to better understand how to overcome disease.

“By bridging the research funding gap in IDeA states, we are building innovative research teams, leveraging the power of shared resources, and enhancing the science and technology knowledge of the

states’ workforce,” said NCRR Director Barbara M. Alving, M.D. “It is through this focused and innovative approach that we are producing a pipeline of researchers who will become future leaders working to improve the health of diverse populations throughout the nation.”

NCRR Funds Two New Biomedical Technology Research Centers

NCRR is providing up to an estimated \$11 million over the next five years to establish two new Biomedical Technology Research Centers (BTRCs) designed to provide researchers nationwide with access to specialized research tools, training and state-of-the-art equipment. One center at the Northern California Institute for Research and Education, Inc., in San Francisco will develop innovative imaging techniques designed specifically to better diagnose and treat diseases, such as Alzheimer’s. A second center at the University of California, San Diego, will create cutting-edge software for identifying and analyzing sets of interacting

proteins that are important in a wide range of diseases, such as cancer.

Each center creates critical and often unique technology to apply to a broad range of basic, clinical and translational research. Serving as test beds for solving complex biomedical research problems, BTRC research projects combine the expertise of multidisciplinary technical and biomedical experts both within the center and through collaborative partnerships. These efforts result in innovative solutions to today’s health challenges, which are then actively disseminated to promote rapid adoption and achieve the broadest possible impact.

The advanced techniques developed at the new Northern California Institute for Research and Education BTRC will offer researchers and clinicians who work with neurodegenerative disorders improved image clarity, more reliable and precise methods for capturing anatomical data, more efficient and accurate reconstruction methods, and improved image processing capabilities.

The new center at the University of California, San Diego, will bring creative

NEW MOBILE SCIENCE LAB

The University of Pittsburgh’s Clinical and Translational Science Institute unveiled a new mobile science lab that includes 26 work stations and sits inside a 70-foot tractor trailer. The result of collaboration between two NCRR-funded programs — a Clinical and Translational Science Award and a Science Education Partnership Award — the new lab will provide pre-college students in western Pennsylvania with hands-on opportunities to learn about the latest science research while using state-of-the-art lab technology.



mathematical approaches to mass spectrometry and will build a new generation of reliable open-access software tools that will catalyze exchange and collaboration among experimental and computational researchers in proteomics, furthering advances in this critical field of research. The center will also focus on training the scientific community in the use of the technologies it develops.

To learn more about the two new BTRC awardees, visit www.ncrr.nih.gov/btrc/2008. For more information about the BTRC program, visit www.ncrr.nih.gov/btrc.

New Animal Model Resource Planned

Scientists who work with animal models can look forward to a new Web site and database being designed to increase research efficiency, improve collaboration and ultimately help bridge the gap between basic science and human medicine. With funding from NCRR, the “Linking Animal Models to Human Disease Initiative” (LAMHDI) will integrate data and information about animal models and make them available to health researchers throughout the world. This new resource is being developed to make it easier for the biomedical research community to locate, identify, apply and build upon the most useful animal models for research.

“LAMHDI will give biomedical researchers worldwide access to a simple, yet comprehensive Web-based resource that will enable scientists to quickly find the best animal models for their research studies,” said Harold Watson, LAMHDI project officer, NCRR Division of Comparative Medicine. “Critical tools such as these can

help accelerate the research process, ultimately leading us to faster treatments.”

The initiative grew out of an August 2008 meeting on Animal Models: Informatics and Access. At this meeting, animal research and informatics experts explored ways to remove research barriers and to develop frameworks for effective computation on existing animal models data to facilitate medical progress. To learn more about this meeting, visit www.ncrr.nih.gov/publications/comparative_medicine/animal_models_informatics_and_access.asp.

The \$1.57 million NCRR-funded project will be supported by a contract to Turner Consulting Group, a government technology, strategy and IT firm.

RCMI International Symposium on Health Disparities

Focusing on the theme of *Research Outcomes Accelerating Discoveries for Medical Applications and Practice*, the Eleventh RCMI International Symposium on Health Disparities was held December 1-4, 2008, at the University of Hawaii, John A. Burns School of Medicine. The symposium was sponsored by NCRR’s Research Centers in Minority Institutions (RCMI) program, which enhances the research capacity and infrastructure at 18 minority colleges and universities that offer doctorates in health sciences. With 490 attendees and more than 300 scientific sessions, the symposium highlighted basic, clinical and translational research



on the biological, environmental, cultural, socioeconomic and bio-behavioral bases of health disparities in cancer, cardiovascular disease, HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, obesity and metabolic syndromes, and neuropsychiatric disorders.

In recognition of World AIDS Day, the 2008 symposium opened with a keynote address on overcoming the scientific challenges in HIV prevention given by Lauren V. Wood, senior clinical investigator in the Vaccine Branch at the National Cancer Institute. Other keynote speakers included Barbara Alving, NCRR director; J. Donald Capra, president emeritus, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation; John E. Maupin, Jr., president, Morehouse School of Medicine; and Sidney McNairy, Jr., director, NCRR Division of Research Infrastructure. Emma Fernandez-Repollet, vice president of research and technology and professor of pharmacology at the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, received the Frederick C. Greenwood Award for her commitment to the training of minority scientists, her leadership and accomplishments in research administration, her long-standing service and dedication to the RCMI community, and contributions to biomedical research.

Also featured were keynote and plenary lectures by individuals who have made significant and seminal contributions to research on health disparities, improving health care access and delivery, and partnering with vulnerable populations and marginalized communities to eliminate health disparities.

Additional information about the presenters and their research can be found at www.mpi-evv.com/2008RCMI/research-path/default.htm. ■