



MASSACHUSETTS LIFE SCIENCES CENTER

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Massachusetts Life Sciences Center Board Approves Cooperative Research Grants

Center will provide \$3.7 million to support six innovative research projects with scientific and commercial potential

Boston, Massachusetts, (December 16, 2008) –The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center (“MLSC”), a quasi-public agency tasked with implementing the State’s \$1 billion life sciences initiative, today announced the awarding of more than \$3.7 million in cooperative research grants. The Center’s Cooperative Research Grant Program funds collaborations between scientists, academic institutions and industry that promise significant commercial potential in the near term and are scientifically meritorious. The Center’s Board of Directors approved the first-ever round of Cooperative Research Grants today. Six projects were funded out of a total of twenty-seven that were submitted to the Center for consideration. The grants will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the industry partners involved with each collaboration.

“The Cooperative Research Grant Program builds on the Center’s strategy of using public investments to leverage private sector resources as we pursue our dual mission of job creation, and support for good science that will improve the human condition,” said Dr. Susan Windham Bannister, President & CEO of the MLSC. “We have identified worthy scientific research projects with commercial potential that are taking place in various parts of the state, involving collaborations between some of our leading life sciences companies, scientists, and academic and medical institutions. These investments will bring solid returns for our local economy and for medical and scientific knowledge throughout the world.”

“After rigorous review by me and other members of the Life Sciences Center’s Scientific Advisory Board, we recommended these six grants as holding great potential for both scientific advancement and commercialization,” said Dr. Harvey Lodish, Chair of the MLSC Scientific Advisory Board, Member of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, and Professor of Biology and Professor of Bioengineering at MIT. “Important

advances in medicine can only be realized, and treatments can only be developed and brought to market, if the relevant research is funded. These are sensible investments for the Commonwealth that will both create jobs and advance scientific knowledge.” (*Draft quote in need of approval from Dr. Lodish)

The six recipients announced today are:

Dr. Rudolf Faust/UMass Lowell/Boston Scientific - \$199,596 per year for three years

Dr. Rudolf Faust will work with three postdoctorals and two graduate students at the University of Massachusetts Lowell and at Boston Scientific Corp. of Natick, Massachusetts to collaborate on the design, precision synthesis, and nanomanufacturing of new biocompatible and functional materials for better performance in several medical devices. Polymers in use today such as Dacron, Teflon, and Plexiglass have been used as biomaterials for applications such as vascular grafts, hip and knee replacements, and bone cements, but were not designed from a materials science point of view. The researchers will design polyisobutylene-based urethane lead coatings to be used with pacemakers and defibrillators. Boston Scientific has 27,500 employees.

Dr. Judy Lieberman/Immune Disease Institute/Epic Therapeutics - \$250,000 per year for three years

Dr. Judy Lieberman, Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, will work with the Immune Disease Institute and Epic Therapeutics of Norwood, Massachusetts to test PROMAXX microparticles with siRNAs for antiviral effects in female mice on the viral infections HSV-2 and HPV and verify that they do not cause unanticipated toxicity. The results could be extended to the development of topical microbicides that could be used to prevent the sexual transmission of HSV-2, the most important risk factor for the sexual transmission of HIV to women and newborns. Epic Pharmaceuticals is a wholly owned subsidiary of Baxter Healthcare Corporation with 54 employees.

Dr. David Weitz/Harvard University School of Engineering and Applied Sciences/Raindance Technologies - \$250,000 per year for three years

Dr. David Weitz, Professor of Physics and Applied Physics at Harvard University, will work with Raindance Technologies of Lexington, Massachusetts to develop and demonstrate the use of a new form of fluorescence activated cell sorter (FACS), used to collect biochemical information about individual cells. The researchers hope to explore new applications of FACS that have not yet been feasible, from basic biology and medical studies to drug development. Raindance Technology cited the Life Sciences Act as a reason for their recent relocation to Massachusetts. They have 45 employees.

Dr. Andrew Luster/Massachusetts General Hospital/Idera Pharmaceuticals - \$63,100 per year for three years

Dr. Andrew Luster, Chief of the Division of Rheumatology, Allergy, and Immunology at Massachusetts General Hospital will work with Idera Pharmaceuticals of Cambridge, Massachusetts to determine how effectively Idera's oligonucleotide-based TLR7 and TLR9 antagonist molecules inhibit human immune cell activation. The research

is directed toward developing new therapies for autoimmune diseases such as Lupus. Idera Pharmaceuticals has 40 employees.

Dr. Richard Lee and Dr. Parth Patwari/Brigham & Women's Hospital/Biomeasure Inc. - \$250,000 per year for three years

Dr. Richard Lee and Dr. Parth Patwari of Harvard Medical School will work with Brigham and Women's Hospital and Biomeasure Inc. of Milford, Massachusetts on in vivo pre-clinical tests of their heparin-binding protein invention. The new protein may enhance cartilage regeneration after traumatic injury and provide therapy for osteoarthritis. Biomeasure has 107 employees.

Dr. Michael Czech and Dr. Gary Ostroff/UMass Medical School/RXI Pharmaceuticals - \$249,593 per year for three years

Dr. Michael Czech and Dr. Gary Ostroff of UMass Medical School will work with RXI Pharmaceuticals of Worcester, Massachusetts on research revealing how RNAi may be harnessed as an orally available medicine. Their previous results show that effective gene silencing can be achieved in mice by oral delivery of siRNA that is encapsulated within micronized, hollow shells of β 1,3-D-glucan (denoted GeRPs). This technology specifically directs the siRNA to dendritic cells and macrophages, cell types which promote pathogenic inflammation in such diseases as arthritis, colitis, atherosclerosis and diabetes. The collaboration will seek to advance these findings towards commercially viable RNAi therapeutics. RXI Pharmaceuticals has 21 employees.

About the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center

The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center (MLSC) is a quasi-public agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The MLSC was established to promote the life sciences within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is tasked with investing in life sciences research and economic development. This work includes making financial investments in public and private institutions growing life sciences research, development and commercialization as well as building ties between sectors of the Massachusetts life sciences community. For more information, visit www.masslifesciences.com.

About the Cooperative Research Program

The Cooperative Research Solicitation seeks to increase industry-sponsored research at universities and colleges in Massachusetts in order to facilitate scientific discoveries and inventions that lead to beneficial medical applications. A successful applicant will receive a grant of up to \$250,000 per year for up to three years, in a 1:1 match with its industry partner.

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