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UGA and Georgia Tech award \$200,000 in grants through new interinstitutional program focused on biomedical research

Writer: Rebecca Ayer, 706/583-0578, alea@uga.edu

Contact: Harry Dailey, 706/542-5922, hdailey@uga.edu

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Athens, Ga. – The University of Georgia and the Georgia Institute of Technology have awarded four interinstitutional research teams a total of \$200,000 to conduct biomedical research and expand collaborative research between the two universities.

The Georgia Tech/UGA Biomedical Research Program, administered by the Petit Institute for Bioengineering and Bioscience at Georgia Tech and the UGA Biomedical and Health Sciences Institute (BHSI), will provide each research team with \$50,000 annually for a period of up to two years.

“The intent of the program is to leverage the different strengths of Georgia Tech and UGA and provide the opportunity for faculty from the two institutions to be successful in seeking external grants that will fund joint research,” said Harry Dailey, BHSI director.

Applications were reviewed by a joint committee of biomedical scientists from both institutions and evaluated on the basis of scientific merit, potential for external funding and value toward enhancing biomedical research collaborations between the two institutions.

The funded projects and coprincipal investigators are as follows:

* Richard Dluhy, a professor of chemistry at UGA, and Lawrence Bottomley, a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at Georgia Tech, will combine nanotechnology with surface enhanced raman-nanoforce (SERS) microscopy in order to develop a biosensor capable of direct, rapid and sensitive detection of infectious viral agents, particularly those which cause respiratory illnesses.

* Roughly 14 percent of known human inherited conditions are present with craniofacial abnormality. Nancy Manley, an associate professor in genetics at UGA, and J. Todd Strelman, an assistant professor in biology at Georgia Tech, will work to identify the molecules and genetic pathways necessary for jaw development using the cichlid fish as a model system.

* Steve Stice, a professor of animal and dairy science at UGA, and Todd McDevitt, a professor in biomedical engineering at Georgia Tech, will design in vitro microenvironments capable of controlling human embryonic stem cell (hESC) behavior. They hope to eventually be able to describe the cell signaling pathways involved in maintaining undifferentiated hESCs.

* Walter Schmidt, an assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at UGA, and Yury Chernoff, an associate professor of biology at Georgia Tech, will study the formation and dispersal of amyloids, fiber-like protein aggregates characteristic of such diseases as Alzheimer's, Huntington's or Parkinson's disease and prion diseases.

For more information on UGA's Biomedical and Health Sciences Institute, visit www.biomed.uga.edu. Information on Georgia Tech's Petit Institute for Bioengineering and Bioscience can be found online at www.ibb.gatech.edu.

Hodgson Oil Building, Rm Suite 200N
286 Oconee Street
Athens, GA 30602-4999
Telephone (706) 542-8083 • Fax (706) 542-3939
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