



## **NEWS RELEASE** Contact: Pam Sharitz-Tesch, (816) 753-7700

### **Life Sciences Institute Awards a Dozen Research Development Grants: Funding stimulates research collaboration between academic researchers/companies**

KANSAS CITY (January 22, 2007) –The Kansas City Area Life Sciences Institute (KCALS I) announces the award of a twelve, \$25,000 Research Development Grants in a variety of research categories. **“The development grant program has been very successful in fostering inter-institutional scientific collaboration. We routinely see an average 8:1 return on these grants - \$8 federal research dollars for every one of our dollars invested. A new addition this year, grants targeting comparative medicine research seek to stimulate partnerships between university and private company researchers, expediting the flow of new discoveries into the marketplace,” reports Keith Gary, Ph.D., KCALS I Director of Program Development.** Award recipients have been notified and a celebratory luncheon at KCALS I is scheduled for Wednesday, January 31.

All grants undergo a rigorous peer-review process patterned after the one used by the National Institutes of Health. Each proposal is assigned to three reviewers who provide written comments and assign a priority score. Top scoring grants are submitted to the KCALS I Board of Directors for final approval.

#### **And the Winners are...**

**General Research Development Grants** target five disease focus areas which include Oncology, Cardiovascular Disease, Neuroscience, Animal Health/ Comparative Medicine, and Technology Applied to Biological Problems. KCALS I received 34 letters of intent and 29 proposals were submitted. Two of these grants were made possible through funding by the Paul Patton Trust fund administered by the Bank of America. The six *General Research Development Grants* are awarded to:

- Sushanta Banerjee, Ph.D., Professor, Kansas City Veterans Administration Hospital, ‘Role of WISP2/CCN5 in a Breast Cancer Mouse Model’
- Juan Bruses, M.D., Ph.D. Associate Professor, University of Kansas Medical Center, ‘Role of N-cadherin in neuronal and synaptic patterning’
- Sarah Kieweg, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Kansas, ‘Measuring vaginal tissue mechanics in vivo to optimize anti-HIV drug delivery’
- Joan McDowd, Ph.D., Professor, Associate Director for Research, University of Kansas Medical Center, ‘Measuring Executive Function in Aging and Age-related Neurological Diseases’
- Yu-Ping Wang, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Missouri - Kansas City, ‘Computation Imaging, Integrated Molecular Karyotyping, Gene Expression Analysis’

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- Asma Zaidi, M.Phil., Ph.D., Research Assistant Professor, University of Kansas, 'Age-dependent changes in the cardiac plasma membrane Ca<sup>2+</sup>ATPase'

**Genetic Markers of Cardiovascular Disease Grants** target genetic markers of cardiovascular disease. KCALSI received six letters of intent and five proposals. Funds for these grants were provided by Blue Cross, Blue Shield of Kansas City. The two *Genetic Markers of Cardiovascular Disease Grants* are awarded to:

- Hong-Wen Deng, Ph.D., Professor, Dickson/Missouri Endowed Chair, University of Missouri - Kansas City, 'Powerful and robust test of TNF- $\alpha$  gene with obesity, a key risk factor for cardiovascular disease'
- Mark L. Johnson, Ph.D., Professor, University of Missouri - Kansas City, 'Tissue Protein Profiling to Identify Genes Underlying Aortic Valve Calcification'

**Comparative Medicine Grants** stimulate greater collaboration between academic researchers and scientists in animal health/nutrition companies and target disease processes that affect both humans and animals. Five letters of intent were received and two proposals were submitted. Funds for these grants were provided through a federal U.S. Department of Labor grant and Bayer Animal Health. Following external peer review, these two proposals are awarded to:

- Mark Weiss, Ph.D., Professor, Kansas State University, 'Transgenic rats created via rat embryonic stem cell technology'
- J. Lillich, DVM, MS, DACVS, Associate Professor, Kansas State University, 'In vitro & ex vivo assessment of a novel lipopolysaccharide binding pharmacophore'

**Neuroscience Grants** must address novel methodologies, targets for drug development, and/or chemical compounds active in the CNS. KCALSI's goal is develop projects consistent with research interest areas of TEVA Neuroscience, Inc to foster public/private partnerships, effectively identify new technologies/therapeutics, and increase regional technology transfer/commercialization activities. Nine letters of interest were expressed and 6 proposals were received. Funds for these grants were provided through TEVA Neuroscience Inc. Following a TEVA Neuroscience peer review, two grants are awarded to:

- Nancy Hammond, M.D., Assistant Professor, University of Kansas Medical Center, 'Comparison of Bone Effects with Copaxone and Interferon in Multiple Sclerosis'
- Michael A. Johnson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Kansas State University, 'Striatal Dopamine Release in Fragile X Syndrome'

#### **About KCALSI**

The Kansas City Area Life Sciences Institute (KCALSI) is a non-profit organization assisting with the transformation of Kansas City into a center of excellence in life sciences research and development, and commercialization. The KCALSI and its stakeholder institutions share an ambitious goal—to excel in the areas of animal health/nutrition, biopharma/drug discovery, cardiovascular, neuroscience, oncology, and personalized medicines to become a national leader in biotechnology fields. KCALSI serves as the coordinating body for the Kansas City region's life sciences research initiatives, specifically as broker, facilitator, matchmaker and potential funding organization for collaborative research initiatives. For more information, please visit [www.kclifesciences.org](http://www.kclifesciences.org).

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