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UCLA's Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Medicine Receives \$3.75 Million to Train Researchers

Grant from the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine is the largest awarded to train the next generation of stem cell scientists

The UCLA Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Medicine received a three-year, \$3.75-million grant — the largest awarded — from the state to train young scientists to conduct stem cell research.

UCLA's stem cell institute received the full amount of funding requested from the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine, formed to oversee and fund stem cell research after voters in November overwhelmingly passed Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative. At a meeting in Sacramento, the state's Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee voted on and awarded the first stem cell research grants Friday.

UCLA stem cell institute officials said the money will help prepare the next generation of scientists who will conduct this leading-edge research.

"The aim of our program is to train basic scientists, engineers and physicians to become leaders in stem cell research," said Dr. Owen Witte, director of the UCLA stem cell institute; a professor of microbiology, immunology and molecular genetics; and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator. "A distinctive feature of UCLA's program is that these scientists will be trained from a multidisciplinary perspective."

The Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Medicine will train 16 pre-doctoral, post-doctoral and clinical research scholars. Each will be offered various training options, including working with faculty who are leaders in cell and molecular biology, gene medicine, cell-based therapies, and organ transplantation.

Witte said the training program also will accommodate those interested in the social, legal, ethical or policy aspects of stem cell research.

"This will benefit the people of California by providing high-quality training in the scientific, clinical, social and ethical aspects of stem cell research to the scientists and clinicians who will be developing the future therapies in this rapidly emerging field," said Judith C.

2-2-2 Stem Cell Biology

Gasson, co-director of the Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Medicine and director of UCLA's Jonsson Cancer Center.

The Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Medicine training grant application received high marks, winning 94 out of a possible 100 points. The institute's research focus includes HIV/AIDS, cancer, neurological disorders, and bone and cardiac disease, as well as metabolic disorders such as diabetes.

Pending lawsuits could postpone the funding process, although California officials have indicated that the state will provide the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine with the funding to cover the first round of grants.

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