

Contact:

Jim Spencer 303-315-0554; 720-346-4242 jim.spencer@uchsc.edu

Jacque Montgomery 303-724-1528; 303-928-9093 jacque.montgomery@uchsc.edu

University of Colorado Denver lands \$76 million grant to speed discoveries from labs to lives

AURORA, Colo. (May 29, 2008) - The University of Colorado Denver has received a \$76 million, five-year grant to speed biomedical discoveries from laboratories to the lives of citizens. The grant from the National Institutes of Health is the largest research and training award in the state's history. UC Denver will use the money to create an unprecedented statewide network of research, health care and community facilities. These groups, working together as the new Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute – or CCTSI - will turn biomedical findings into improved patient and community health.

The CCTSI will combine and coordinate the efforts of research scientists, health care providers, and advocates from six health care professional schools, five hospitals, a health care network, more than a dozen community health organizations and a research university.

“We’re going to have the right scientists doing the right research on the diseases that are important to the people of Colorado,” said pediatrician Ronald Sokol, MD, a UC Denver School of Medicine physician who will direct the CCTSI. “We plan to convert discoveries into treatment, prevention, lifestyle changes and education.”

In a ceremony at the UC Denver School of Medicine’s Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora, Gov. Bill Ritter praised Colorado’s “many outstanding medical and bioscience research facilities.”

“We’re extremely pleased the federal government has selected this outstanding collaborative of Colorado institutions to receive such an impressive grant award,” Ritter said. “The close ties among Colorado’s world-class institutions provide a unique opportunity to spark unprecedented innovation in the cost, quality and availability of health care across Colorado and the nation.”

U.S. Sen. Ken Salazar described the grant as another step in solidifying the University of Colorado Denver’s reputation.

“The University of Colorado Denver has long been recognized as a pioneer in the field of biomedical research,” Salazar said. “And now, as a result of this boost in federal funding, the university will have more resources to dedicate to maintaining its position among the upper echelon of biomedical research institutions in the world, while developing better programs to get new medical discoveries to the public faster.”

This new level of cooperation stands to give Colorado a leading role in a critical endeavor. The Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute will build a regional partnership among the UC Denver Schools of Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Public Health, Graduate School and College of Nursing, as well as CU-Boulder, University of Colorado Hospital, The Children's Hospital, Denver Health, National Jewish Medical and Research Center, the Denver Veterans' Affairs Medical Center and Kaiser Permanente Colorado.

“A unique feature of this consortium of health care and research institutions is the diversity of the populations served,” said Sokol. “Research conducted through the CCTSI will include rural, urban, Hispanic, African-American, Native American, all socioeconomic levels and the full life cycle of the population served – pregnant women and infants through the elderly. Working with the other Clinical and Translational Science Award recipients across the country should enable the CCTSI to take full advantage of discoveries both here and elsewhere and disseminate best practice approaches into Colorado communities in a rapid and efficient manner.”

The Institute's five areas of focus will be: training future researchers, converting laboratory research to clinical use, applying clinical lessons in communities, discovering new methods and applying technologies to measure and analyze data, and advancing child and maternal research.

“We've never been organized quite this way,” Sokol explained. “We're going to have common goals and common measurements.”

He pointed to such innovations as a shared Internet site where Institute members can connect with each other based on their research interests. “You'll type in a term, and you'll be connected to what everybody else at UC Denver is doing in that area,” Sokol said. “We're going to create research teams by linking people.”

The Institute will also create teams through financial stimulus. The CCTSI will use part of its NIH support to fund pilot research grants, but those grants will only go to laboratory scientists who pair themselves with clinical scientists.

“The ideal team for a pilot award would be a basic scientist, a clinical scientist and a community scientist,” Sokol added.

Shared administrative resources and technology, along with shared databases of biomedical information and clinical information will streamline the application of research to real people.

This effort includes some unique problem-solving.

“If an investigator has a technological problem,” said Sokol, “we might put the problem out on our network and award another Institute member \$20,000 to solve it. This could end up in a patentable idea. It’s a way of bringing scientists together who didn’t know each other existed.”

Offices of Technology Transfer at CU-Boulder and the Anschutz Medical Campus will try to involve private companies in collaborations with the Institute’s scientists.

The CCTSI expects to create jobs, though the number of jobs depends on the success of the research, Sokol explained. In any case it will “be money coming back to the state from the federal government,” said Sokol. “It will be putting people to work.”

Congressman Ed Perlmutter, whose district includes the Anschutz Medical Campus, called the facility “an economic driver.” “The jobs created here have had a positive impact on Aurora, the Denver metro area, the state of Colorado and the entire Rocky Mountain region,” Perlmutter said.

Bruce Benson, president of the University of Colorado system, praised the collaboration between so many public and private institutions.

“This wouldn’t have been possible without strong public-private partnerships,” Benson said. “Our common good is served by these types of partnerships and they should be pursued whenever possible.”

With its \$76.1 million Clinical and Translational Science Award UC Denver joins 14 new and 24 current CTSA recipients in a national consortium of institutions moving discoveries from labs to lives.

“For us at the University of Colorado Denver, this award is a special one, not only for its size and relative rarity,” UC Denver Chancellor M. Roy Wilson, MD, MS, said. “For us this award is a special acknowledgement of what we strive to do every day – using the unique gifts our university has to offer to improve the lives of our community both locally and globally.”

The NIH created the Clinical and Translational Science Award to stimulate collaboration between leading academic health centers, health care organizations, the private sector and the communities they serve. The result is a historically large public investment in health care research and training that promises to pay similarly large and historic dividends.

The CCTSI will conduct state-of-the art clinical research, under careful oversight to assure participant safety. In addition, the Institute will take a life-span approach by linking the network of health care providers who deal with an individual almost literally from womb to tomb.

For example, a novel program in Child and Maternal Health research will emphasize the continuum of life-long physical, emotional and social health that begins during pregnancy.

“We realize that small interventions in pregnancy and early childhood may have major effects on preventing illnesses and diseases that we get later in life,” Sokol explained.

Furthermore, the CCTSI will develop a new partnership among statewide community research programs and foundations to better understand the health care needs of individual places and groups. This effort will emphasize the participation of underserved people, such as Native Americans and Latinos.

New training programs will emphasize developing a new generation of translational investigators with advanced degrees, interdisciplinary and collaborative skills and a team approach to research.

“Researchers of the future can’t do their work behind locked doors,” Sokol said. “Not if the Institute is to deliver on its ultimate goal, which is to allow the population of this state to have new treatments first.”

The [School of Medicine](#) faculty work to advance science and improve care as the physicians, educators and scientists at University of Colorado Hospital, The Children’s Hospital, Denver Health, National Jewish Medical and Research Center, and the Denver Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Degrees offered by the UC Denver School of Medicine include doctor of medicine, doctor of physical therapy, and masters of physician assistant studies. The School is part of the [University of Colorado Denver](#), one of three universities in the University of Colorado system. For additional news and information, please visit the [UC Denver newsroom](#) online.

#####