



News Release:
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HSSA Awards \$1.965 Million to WSU College of Pharmacy
Three Researchers, Core Lab Equipment Funded by Award

SPOKANE, Wash. – The **Health Sciences and Services Authority** (HSSA) of Spokane County has awarded its single largest grant to date for \$1.965 million to the WSU Spokane College of Pharmacy.

The grant will match WSU start-up recruitment packages for three research-active faculty and complete the build-out of core research laboratory infrastructure for the new Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Sciences Building on the Spokane campus.

“We are quite pleased to announce this significant grant to WSU to continue to bring highly qualified researchers to Spokane and complete the research laboratory equipment needs of the new Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Sciences Building,” said **Nancy Isserlis**, HSSA Board Chair. “HSSA’s role is to help grow the public and private health sciences research capacity that is so important to diversifying and growing our regional economy,” she said.

“As proven out in the first HSSA grant made to WSU’s College of Pharmacy in 2011,” said **Dr. Gary M. Pollack**, Dean, WSU College of Pharmacy. “HSSA’s commitment has had a tremendous return on its investment so far for them, for WSU and for this community, and we expect the same for this round of recruitments.

“These funds will help WSU Spokane continue to attract top talent to the campus and to fund critical core laboratory infrastructure required by these researchers,” Pollack said. “We simply would not be where we are today without HSSA’s support.”

Under HSSA RFP #5, Invest in Human Capital to Accelerate Spokane's Health Sciences Research Capacity, HSSA requires that the researchers bring current grant funding to Spokane in their new assignments, and that they spend 75 percent of their time conducting research. Individual project budgets may total up to \$500,000 per year for two years and are open to research-intensive academic institutions with active health sciences research programs.

In 2011, HSSA granted WSU Spokane approximately \$1.4 million for two impressive research hires and core laboratory equipment that brings HSSA's total commitment to WSU to nearly \$3.4 million. The two researchers HSSA helped fund in 2011, Dr. Phil Lazarus and Dr. Mike Gibson, have already provided in the aggregate a 14 to 1 return on the initial HSSA investment to date in extramural funding brought to Spokane along with increased numbers of employees.

The 2013 HSSA grant will match WSU funding in the recruitment start-up packages for the following three researchers:

Dr. Jiyue Zhu, Penn State University, full professor; \$300,000 over two years; current grant funding is \$700,000. Dr. Zhu would employ four (4) scientists within his first year. Dr. Zhu's laboratory focuses on regulation of the human telomerase reverse transcriptase (hTERT) gene, which plays an important role in a variety of normal physiologic processes and in disease, including stem cell self-renewal, cellular aging, and cancer. His work relates to both pharmacogenomics and drug discovery, two of the three areas of focus in WSU's Pharmaceutical Sciences.

Dr. Scott Landfear, Oregon Health and Science University; full professor and will serve as Vice Chair for Pharmaceutical Sciences; \$300,000 over two years; current grant funding portfolio is \$2.4 million. Dr. Landfear's laboratory studies membrane transport proteins in parasites. Dr. Landfear will employ five (5) scientists within his first year. He focuses on the transport systems in the infectious stages of parasitic life cycles. He is developing a high-throughput screen to identify small-molecule inhibitors of glucose transporters for potential anti-parasitic drugs. He would be Pharmacy's initial hire in biological chemistry. His work falls within the scope of target identification and drug discovery/design.

Dr. Salah Ahmed, University of Toledo, Ohio; full professor; \$300,000 over two years; \$2 million in current grant funding. Dr. Ahmed will employ five (5) to six (6) scientists within his first year. He focuses on the development of natural products (specifically epigallocatechin gallate, which is found in green tea) as therapeutic agents for rheumatoid arthritis. He also has begun to focus on the role of pro-inflammatory cytokines and inflammatory mediators in cardiovascular complications of rheumatoid arthritis. He is the second WSU targeted recruit in biological chemistry, and his work parallels Dr. Landfear's research program.

In addition, HSSA's 2013 RFP #5 grant will focus on the necessary infrastructure for these and other current and future researchers needed to build out two core laboratories as follows:

Microscopy & Imaging Core Laboratory, \$705,000:

- Whole-animal image
- Micro-CT scanner
- Intravital microscopy system
- Flow cytometry system
- Inverted fluorescence microscope
- Nanoparticle measurement system

Pharmacogenomics Core Lab, \$360,000:

- Illumina MiSeq Automated gene sequencing
- QuantStudio Spectrometer 2000, microplate reader, and real-time PCR
- Nanodrop, Spectromax, and Bioanalyzer
- Robot

HSSA requires – and WSU Spokane has agreed -- that the core laboratory equipment it funds be available to both public and private researchers in the region. For more information about how to use WSU Spokane’s core laboratory facilities, visit <http://www.healthsciences.wsu.edu/core.facilities.html>.

HSSA invests in health sciences research and research infrastructure to promote economic development in Spokane County, and to advance new therapies, combat disease and promote public health. The organization has funded \$5,585,096 in direct research and infrastructure grants and is responsible for over 160 jobs and over \$12 million in extramural funding in Spokane. In total, HSSA’s investments contribute to 434 jobs and over \$40 million in economic activity, according to economic multipliers used by the Washington Research Council and Tripp Umbach in a University of Washington Economic Impact Study.

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About HSSA:

The **Health Sciences & Services Authority (HSSA) of Spokane County** was established in 2007 by the Washington legislature, authorized county-wide by Spokane County in 2008 and began operating in 2009. Its mission is to invest in health sciences research to promote economic development, advance new therapies and procedures to combat disease and to promote public health. HSSA invests funds to create and support a nationally competitive health sciences research cluster in Spokane County, and works to catalyze higher education research and the health sciences industry that will lead to higher wage jobs, long-term sustainability and economic diversification. For more information, visit our website at www.hssaspokane.org or call 509.483.5986.

About Our Board:

Nancy Isserlis, City Attorney, City of Spokane, and HSSA Board Chair; **Earl F. “Marty” Martin**, Ph.D., Executive Vice President, Gonzaga University and HSSA Board Vice Chair; **Michael Wilson**, Health Care Consultant and former Chief Executive, Providence Health Care and Grants Committee Chair; **Jason Thackston**, Vice President of Energy Delivery, Avista Corp. and Finance Committee Chair; **Dr. Jeff Collins**, Medical Director, Providence Health Care; **Kevin Oldenburg**, Ph.D., Vice President of R&D and Site Head, Brooks Life Science Systems; **Gary Pollack**, Ph.D., Dean, WSU College of Pharmacy; **David J. Vachon**, Ph.D., CEO/Founder, Iasis Molecular Sciences/Novion Technologies, and **Dr. Francisco Velázquez**, President & CEO, PAML and PAML Ventures. **Susan Ashe** is the HSSA Executive Director.