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INNOVATION

STAC grants \$1.1M to research partners

Funding shared by scientists at Brown, URI, hospitals, firms

By **Ted Nesi**
 PBN Web Editor

PROVIDENCE – The R.I. Science and Technology Advisory Council on Wednesday awarded \$1.1 million in grants to six collaborative research projects statewide.

The awards will be shared by 18 scientists from eight institutions. Each project will receive about \$185,000 from STAC.

In a statement, Gov. Donald L. Carcieri said the research will “further our efforts to build an innovation economy and enhance the quality of life for our citizens.”

The total value of the grants was down 26 percent compared with last year, when STAC granted \$1.5 million to seven projects. Carcieri has asked the General Assembly to cut the budget for the Rhode Island Research Alliance, which administers the program, as part of his deficit reduction plan for the current fiscal year.



Let's Talk ...

A total of 38 research proposals were submitted for consideration this year. The six chosen to receive funding will conduct research into:

- New drugs for cancer prevention and chemotherapy using the spice turmeric (James N. Jacob of Coventry-based Organomed Corp. and Wayne Bowen of Brown University);
- Oral diagnostic kits to allow non-invasive monitoring of the concentration of immunosuppressive agents (Fatemeh Akhlaghi of the University of Rhode Island and Reginald Gohh of Rhode Island Hospital);
- New lithium battery technology using durable silicon thin-film anodes and new electrolytes (Pradeep Guduru and Christopher Bull, both of Brown University, and Brett Lucht of URI);
- Identifying early-stage bladder cancer with 3-D imaging (Gabriel Taubin of Brown, George E. Haleblan and Gyan Pareek, both of Rhode Island Hospital, and Jason D. Harry of Providence-based Lucidux Corporation LLC);
- New strategies for preventing brain damage in premature infants (Barbara Stonestreet and James Padbury, both of Women & Infants Hospital,

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Yow-Pin Lim of East Providence-based ProThera Biologics Inc. and R. Choudary Hanumara of URI);

- Improving the diagnosis of epilepsy and other neurological disorders (Walter G. Besio of URI, John Gaitanis of Brown University and Michael Sullivan of West Warwick-based Astro-Med Inc.).

The R.I. Research Alliance and Collaborative Research Award Program was created to foster research collaborations between academic and commercial institutions in the state. It focuses on projects that eventually are expected to attract significant outside funding from government agencies, such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, or private investors.

In its first four years, the Research Alliance has awarded about \$5 million to 30 research teams from 27 different institutions. "These grants are an important investment of state monies and will lead to discoveries that will return follow-on funding and commercialization opportunities back to Rhode Island," STAC Co-Chair David Farmer, dean of URI's Graduate School of Oceanography, said in a news release.

STAC held its first meeting of the year this morning at the R.I. Economic Development Corporation's headquarters in Providence. In addition to revealing the collaborative research grant recipients, the council was scheduled to hear a presentation on climate change from Jerry Melillo, a research at Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass.

Last year, STAC members said the state's \$1.5 million annual appropriation for research grants is a requirement in order for Rhode Island to fulfill the requirements of the three-year, \$6.75 million EPSCoR grant the state won in 2006. The current grant runs through June 30.

The state is now applying for a five-year extension of the grant that could bring up to \$20 million in new research funds here. Officials expect to receive a final decision about the EPSCoR extension in late May or early June.

Additional information is available at stac.ri.gov.

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