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The Broad Foundation Donates \$20 Million to UCLA Stem Cell Institute

The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation is donating \$20 million to fund adult and embryonic stem cell research at UCLA, enhancing a program that brings together biologists, chemists, engineers, geneticists and other scientists to develop new and more effective treatments for cancer, HIV/AIDS, Parkinson's, metabolic disorders and other medical conditions.

In recognition of the gift, the Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Medicine at UCLA will be renamed the Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at UCLA. The gift will be used to purchase specialized, high-tech laboratory equipment and will support faculty recruitment through research grants and endowed professorships, enabling UCLA to continue its leadership in cutting-edge, multidisciplinary scientific and medical research.

The gift was announced today at a public event at UCLA attended by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, UCLA Chancellor Gene Block, UCLA Acting Chancellor Emeritus Norman Abrams, philanthropists Eli and Edythe Broad, stem cell center director and renowned scientist Dr. Owen Witte and other faculty, staff and supporters.

"California is at the vanguard of stem cell research, and we need to leverage the voter-approved funds of Proposition 71," Eli Broad said. "This center further establishes UCLA as a pioneer in the field of stem cell research, which holds great potential to dramatically improve the human condition."

"We are deeply grateful for the generosity of Eli and Edythe Broad, which is making a difference all across our campus," Abrams said. "This latest gift will enable UCLA to remain at the forefront of one of the newest frontiers of science, one that holds enormous promise for regenerative medicine."

Block, who came to UCLA in August, said the gift will help the university achieve one of its primary goals as a public research university.

“UCLA has a responsibility to pursue innovation that can transform the quality of life in our region and the world,” he said. “This generous support will advance that pursuit in a significant way.”

Schwarzenegger, whose father-in-law, Sargent Shriver, has Alzheimer’s disease, has been a vocal supporter of stem cell research. As governor, he arranged for the state to loan \$150 million to the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) to provide the agency overseeing Proposition 71 with funding during multiple legal challenges.

“Stem cell research holds the potential for incredible advances in medicine, and hope for the eventual end of the suffering from diseases like Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and cancer,” Schwarzenegger said. “California has always been a pioneer. This generous gift will help ensure that California continues to lead the way in stem cell research, developing therapies and cures that we could only imagine a few years ago.”

Villaraigosa said the gift “puts Los Angeles on the cutting-edge of stem cell research and on the forefront of developing life saving cures.”

“Here in Los Angeles, we are surrounded by the world’s leading universities and research centers,” he said. “We are a cradle of creativity in L.A. and throughout California.”

Witte said the gift will help UCLA advance its science more quickly, positioning stem cell center scientists at the leading-edge of this emerging field.

“Embryonic stem cells hold tremendous potential for treating many life-threatening diseases because they have the ability to develop into every type of human tissue,” said Witte, a professor of microbiology, immunology and molecular genetics and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator. “With the Broad Foundation gift, we will be able to continue to make great strides in learning how stem cells self-renew and differentiate and to potentially translate that knowledge into treatments for the many serious ailments that plague society.”

The stem cell center was launched in 2005 with a \$20 million commitment over five years from UCLA. Since that time, institute officials have recruited some of the country’s top stem cell scientists to fill six of 12 new faculty positions. The new faculty members – from renowned institutions such as Harvard, MIT and Johns Hopkins – were drawn to UCLA because of the highly collaborative research environment and the state’s stem cell research-friendly atmosphere, said Witte.

Stem cell center scientists have successfully competed for grants from CIRM. The center received the largest training grant awarded by the state, \$3.75 million, to train the next generation of stem cell researchers, and UCLA scientists were awarded nine seed and comprehensive grants totaling more than \$9 million. In June, the stem cell center was awarded a \$2.8 million grant from the state to construct lab space dedicated to the creation of new human embryonic stem cell lines and continued research on existing stem cell lines.

Additionally, a UCLA stem cell scientist was among a group of researchers that recently made a major scientific advance when they reprogrammed normal tissue cells from a mouse into cells with the same unlimited properties as embryonic stem cells. If this can be replicated in humans, the implications for disease treatment would be significant. Reprogramming adult stem cells into embryonic stem cells could generate a potentially limitless source of immune-compatible cells for tissue engineering and transplantation.

Administrative offices and some of the laboratory space for the Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at UCLA will be located in the new Biomedical Sciences Research Building, which opened in June. The 133,000-square-foot facility is designed with an open floor plan to facilitate collaborative research in state-of-the-art laboratories serving world-class researchers in basic cell and molecular biology, biochemistry, immunology and other fields. UCLA faculty members who are part of the stem cell center have offices and laboratories both in the building and at other locations across campus.

The stem cell center is a collaboration of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, UCLA's Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center, UCLA Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science, and the UCLA College. It also involves close collaborations with the UCLA schools of law, nursing, dentistry and public affairs, UCLA AIDS Institute, UCLA Center for Society and Genetics, Brian Research Institute and the California Nanosystems Institute.

The center is committed to a multi-disciplinary, integrated collaboration of scientific, academic and medical disciplines for the purpose of understanding adult and human embryonic stem cells. The center supports innovation, excellence and the highest ethical standards focused on stem cell research with the intent of facilitating basic scientific inquiry directed towards future clinical applications to treat disease. For more information, visit www.stemcell.ucla.edu.

About UCLA

UCLA is California's largest university, with an enrollment of nearly 37,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The UCLA College of Letters and Science and the university's 11 professional schools feature renowned faculty and offer more than 300 degree programs and majors. UCLA is a national and international leader in the breadth and quality of its academic, research, health care, cultural, continuing education and athletic programs. Four alumni and five faculty have been awarded the Nobel Prize.

About The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation

The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation is a national venture philanthropy established by entrepreneur and philanthropist Eli Broad to advance entrepreneurship for the public good in education, science and the arts. The Broad foundation invests in scientific and medical research in the areas of human genomics, stem cell research and inflammatory bowel disease. The Broad Foundation's Internet address is www.broadfoundation.org.