

Searle Family to Fund Biomedical Research in Chicago

CONTACTS:

Megan Fellman, Northwestern University, at (847) 491-3115 or fellman@northwestern.edu

Steve Koppes, University of Chicago, at (773) 702-8366 or s-koppes@uchicago.edu

Jeanne Galatzer-Levy, University of Illinois at Chicago, at (312) 996-1583 or jgala@uic.edu

FOR RELEASE: Feb. 8, 2006

SEARLE FAMILY TO FUND BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH IN CHICAGO

EVANSTON, Ill. --- The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust has made a grant of \$5 million to the Chicago Biomedical Consortium (CBC), a collaboration of Northwestern University, the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago. The grant, the first of a planned five-year donation of \$5 million per year for a total of \$25 million, is designed to support and stimulate innovative multi-institutional collaborations in research and education that will enable the Chicago area to become a leader in the biomedical sciences.

The program will be reviewed in its fourth year. If it progresses as planned, The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust may provide an additional \$25 million for a five-year extension of the program, bringing the 10-year total to \$50 million.

The consortium represents a new avenue for collaborative interactions among researchers and institutional leaders from the three universities. Beyond its expected scientific yields, the CBC will stimulate the creation of new centers and programs, produce intellectual excitement that will attract top faculty and students in the biomedical sciences to the region and help retain them, and create innovative collective resources and essential core research facilities.

"Through the CBC we want to make the Chicago area an exciting place to do pathbreaking biomedical science," said Richard I. Morimoto, Bill and Gayle Cook Professor of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Cell Biology and Northwestern's CBC liaison. "Our goal is to change the entire way research, education and training are done by creating a vibrant community of colleagues at three great universities. This is an extraordinary grant with a huge expectation -- to change the research landscape in the Chicago area. We are expected to do great things, and we will."

During the next five years, hundreds of researchers from the member institutions will conduct research supported by The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust. In addition, all biomedical science researchers in the Chicago area stand to benefit from the consortium by having access to its resources, infrastructure and educational opportunities. For example, one resource -- available to anyone, including physicians, scientists and industry -- will be a database of information about proteins as discoveries occur.

"The Searle Consultants are delighted to honor the legacy of John G. Searle in such a meaningful way," said Nancy S. Searle, a consultant to The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust. "The CBC has great potential for the scientific community of Chicago, as well as residents of the Chicago area and beyond as the benefits from medical advances are realized for patient care."

The CBC focuses on the emerging field of systems biology, which is the study of protein networks, cells, tissues, entire organisms and other biological systems as integrated "wholes." The consortium initially is concentrating on the technologies of proteomics (the study of proteins and their functions) and informatics (the application of computers and other technology to analyze large amounts of data).

The key to understanding human biological functions, both normal and abnormal, lies in the study of the complex interactions that occur among proteins in response to each other and to their environment. The basic science discoveries that emerge from the CBC's research partnerships will speed breakthroughs and insights necessary for the better diagnosis, treatment and prevention of complex diseases, including cancer, heart disease, immune system disorders such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis and neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

"The Trust is pleased to collaborate with the Searle family to support this consortium which traces its roots to the vision and philanthropy of John G. Searle," said Terry Mazany, president and chief executive officer of The Chicago Community Trust. "Without a doubt, the CBC immediately puts Chicago on the map as a leading center for biomedical research, and the potential is enormous for attracting and creating the high quality professional jobs that Chicago needs to compete in a global environment."

The CBC, established in 2002 by scientists at the three universities with support from The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust, already enables collaborative and interdisciplinary research that is beyond the range of a single institution. Biologists are working with physicists, chemists and

computer scientists to create larger multi-laboratory networks for exploring questions related to systems biology.

“One of our goals is to harness the power of advanced computational techniques in the search for solutions to our most pressing biomedical problems,” said Jonathan Silverstein, assistant professor of surgery at the University of Chicago, director of the University of Chicago Hospitals’ Center for Clinical Information and the University of Chicago’s CBC liaison. “There is no other way to effectively sift through the vast and growing volume of biological data and use the information among complex teams to create new knowledge.”

CBC researchers have access to existing state-of-the-art facilities located at the three member institutions including a new Fourier Transform Mass Spectrometer (FTMS), which is the world’s most powerful tool for studying the structures of proteins and other biomolecules, and the computing power and other means for analyzing the massive amounts of data the spectrometer and other instruments produce. Few facilities in the country have such specialized capabilities for proteomics research.

Housed at UIC, the FTMS is available to researchers throughout the area and was purchased last year with support from The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust.

“This new facility is already producing thrilling data,” said Brenda Russell, professor of physiology and biophysics at the University of Illinois at Chicago and UIC’s CBC liaison. “For example, CBC scientists have been able to locate the site of charge modification on specific regions of the proteins responsible for contraction and relaxation of the heart. These charge modifications may well have implications for healthy heart function and provide important information for drug targeting and early diagnosis of heart failure. We anticipate similar breakthroughs in many other areas of health and disease.”

CBC researchers also will tap into the power of the Advanced Photon Source (APS) synchrotron at Argonne National Laboratory, which produces the nation’s most brilliant X-ray beams for scientific research.

During the first phase, the new support from The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust will enable the CBC to continue and expand its efforts, including:

- Provide grants to faculty at the member universities to foster and facilitate large-scale, multi-institutional research collaborations, including those

that could lead to long-term funding from federal or other peer-reviewed granting agencies and the establishment of regional and national centers in Chicago

- Develop scientific infrastructure to be shared among the three institutions, including expensive instrumentation and data-management systems
- Catalyze multi-institutional education programs for Chicago-area faculty, students and industrial partners (workshops, educational modules, new curricular offerings and annual symposia)
- Assist in recruiting new faculty members in the area of proteomics and bioinformatics
- Foster linkages with Chicago-area industry leaders and scientists to help promote the development of the biomedical industry in Chicago

“This unique and generous grant from The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust is just the latest example of the Searle family’s philanthropic commitment to the Chicago area and to biomedical research,” said University of Chicago President Don M. Randel. “With it, our three universities will collaborate even more closely on large-scale projects and help establish the Chicago region as an undisputed leader in the biomedical sciences.”

“The CBC represents a stunning collaboration for complex research and guarantees that facilities like the FTMS are put to their optimal use,” said UIC Chancellor Sylvia Manning. “The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust, by bringing together our resources, both human and technological, will allow us to approach the biology of human disease with the highest creativity.”

“The support of the Searle family and The Chicago Community Trust is critical to our efforts to assemble a nationally recognized biomedical consortium in Chicago,” said Northwestern President Henry S. Bienen. “With this support we can create a productive environment for meaningful medical advances that can benefit the people of Chicago and the nation.”

“The Chicago Biomedical Consortium is exactly the kind of program that my father, John G. Searle, had in mind when he established his charitable trust,” said Daniel C. Searle, former chief executive officer of G.D. Searle & Co.

For more information on the Chicago Biomedical Consortium, go to <http://www.chicagobiomedicalconsortium.org>.

2/8/06