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NEWS RELEASE

State's Research Challenge Fund awards grants for energy, cancer studies at the state's research universities

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission's Division of Science and Research recently announced three five-year awards totaling more than \$4 million. The research projects, which began this month at Marshall University and West Virginia University, seek to develop better electronics, find large-scale ways to store energy, and learn more about cancers affecting West Virginians through grants by the state's Research Challenge Fund.

The Research Challenge Fund, established by the Legislature in 2002, provides seed money for new research through Research Challenge Grants. Projects funded through the program support the creation of research centers and start-up businesses and foster economic development and workforce advancement.

"The primary goal of the state's Research Challenge Fund is to sponsor innovative research at our colleges and universities while improving the institutions' ability to compete for federal and private funding on the national level," said Dr. Paul L. Hill, the Commission's Chancellor.

These projects are the third round of grants from the Research Challenge Fund since the program's inception. The first round, a state investment of \$8.4 million, produced more than \$20 million in external funding and resulted in five start-up companies and 10 patent applications. Results from the second round of grants, awarded in 2007, are being analyzed and will be reported to the Governor and the Legislature by the end of the calendar year.

Funding for the three new research projects officially began July 1, 2012. Each project will receive \$1,350,000 in declining investments over the five-year period. The projects will:

- create a Center for Energy Efficient Electronics at Marshall University and West Virginia University to investigate and develop devices that will lead to next generation electronics that are smaller, faster, and more energy efficient than currently available technology;
- establish a Center for Electrochemical Energy Storage at West Virginia University to conduct fundamental and applied research leading to the development of devices for storing electricity; and

- further develop and expand the West Virginia Cancer Genomics Network to involve Marshall University, West Virginia University, and Charleston Area Medical Center. The network will develop a genetic database for cancers with a higher incidence in West Virginia. These data will be used for further use in studies and clinical trials funded by federal and/or private grants and to develop start-up biotechnology companies.

Principal investigators for the Center for Energy Efficient Electronics study are Dr. David Lederman, professor of physics at West Virginia University; Drs. Alan Bristow, Mikel Holcomb, and Tudor Stanescu, all associate professors of physics at West Virginia University; and Dr. Thomas Wilson, professor of physics at Marshall University.

The principal investigator for the Center for Electrochemical Energy Storage study is Dr. Xingbo Liu, associate professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering at West Virginia University. Co-investigators, all from West Virginia University, are Drs. Ismail Celik and Xueyan Song of mechanical and aerospace engineering; Dr. James Lewis, physics; Dr. Xiaodong “Mike” Shi, chemistry; Dr. Bingyun Li, Health Sciences Center; Patricia Lee, Law; and Kathleen Cullen and Trina Wafle of the National Research Center for Coal and Energy.

Principal investigators for the Cancer Genomics Network study are Dr. Richard Niles, professor and chair of biochemistry and microbiology at Marshall University; Dr. Donald Primerano, professor of biochemistry and director of the Genomics Core at Marshall University; Dr. William Petros, professor of basic pharmaceutical sciences at West Virginia University; and Dr. Todd Kuenstner, director of pathology at Charleston Area Medical Center.

More information about the Research Challenge Grant Program and other research programs is available at www.wvresearch.org.

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