MU commits $4 million to biomedical program

The University of Missouri will extend its partnership with the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation for a program that connects biomedical researchers with the marketplace, officials said at an awards presentation Tuesday.

The MU Coulter Translational Partnership Program was established in 2012 with $5 million from the foundation, which provides resources for scientific and medical research, to be dispersed over five years. The program has funded 18 projects.

Initial funding from the foundation will run out in mid-2017, but MU officials committed $4 million to the foundation during an awards ceremony Tuesday honoring the 2016 grant recipients. The money will help keep the program going for another five years.

Mark McIntosh, MU’s interim vice chancellor for research, graduate studies and economic development, said the program’s success prompted university leaders to invest in it. He said he hopes the investment will increase over time.

“Usually, the Coulter program lasts five years and their expectation is that the university is going to find the benefit in a program like this and find a way to sustain it over a period of time,” McIntosh said. “So, it’s really imperative that we find the resources to sustain this program as we go forward.”

Five research teams made up of faculty from the College of Engineering and School of Medicine received grants this year totaling about $500,000. Their projects are:

- Bret Ulery, chemical engineering assistant professor, and Christina Goldstein, orthopedic surgery assistant professor, are developing OsteoGel to treat compression fractures in the spine.
- A project to store and ship corneas. There’s a shortage of corneas for transplant, said Frederick Fraunfelder, chairman of the ophthalmology department. Donated corneas only can be stored for up to two weeks at eye banks and then are thrown away, he said. Fraunfelder, along with Xu Han, assistant mechanical and aerospace engineering research professor, have created a technique and device that allow corneas to be stored indefinitely and shipped frozen around the world.
Ajit Tharakan, surgery assistant professor, and Raghuraman Kannan, radiology and bioengineering associate professor, created a small camera that detects dye in blood through infrared light to help monitor blood flow during coronary bypass surgery.

Kannan and Danny Schust, radiology and bioengineering associate professor, received funding to use placental cells shed early in pregnancy to find genetic abnormalities.

Filiz Bunyak Ersoy, assistant research professor in the department of computer science, Zhihai He, professor in the department of electrical and computer engineering and Teresa Lever, assistant professor in the department of otolaryngology, are developing a tool that allows clinicians to see the entire larynx during testing in patients with dysphagia, a swallowing impairment.

MU extends program that pushes biomedical discoveries from labs to market

COLUMBIA — MU researcher Ajit Tharakan has developed a camera that can see blood flow during surgeries for coronary artery bypass grafting. The camera makes it easier for doctors to know when blood flow in the new artery is restored before they close the patient's chest.

The Near Infrared Navigation System, or NAVI, was created by Raghuraman Kannan, an associate professor in the departments of Radiology and Bioengineering, and Tharakan. It is among five biomedical projects awarded a portion of about $500,000 in grants to help speed up their paths from lab to market.

"I am very excited about this reward," Tharakan, an assistant professor in the Department of Surgery, said Tuesday at a presentation by the Coulter Translational Partnership Program. "We plan to use this money on human trials and optimize the camera."

It is the fifth year for the Coulter Program Awards. Mark McIntosh, interim vice chancellor for research, said MU will extend the program for another five years, providing $800,000 each year.

At the awards ceremony in Reynolds Alumni Center and in an MU news release, McIntosh called the program a testament to the depth and breadth of research performed at MU. He said the partnership between MU and the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation is based on a common goal of transforming research discoveries into health-care innovations that improve patients' lives.

Based on information from an MU news release, other grant recipients this year are:
OsteoGel: Injectable Osteomodulatory Hydrogels for Vertebral Compression Fracture Repair, developed by Bret Ulery, an assistant professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering, and Christina Goldstein, assistant professor in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery: The new biomaterial is meant to treat vertebral compression fractures in patients with osteoporosis.

Corneal Cryopreservation and Storage System, developed by Xu Han, an assistant research professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, and Frederick Fraunfelder, chair of the Department of Ophthalmology: The inexpensive, disposable storage device protects corneal tissue from damage caused by extracellular ice formation during the freezing process. It has the potential to increase the number of corneal transplants performed each year, especially in countries that must rely on imported corneas and struggle with the current 14-day time limit.

ENSUR: A Novel Diagnostic Prenatal Genetic Test, developed by Raghuraman Kannan and Danny Schust, an associate professor of clinical obstetrics and gynecology in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Women's Health: The diagnostic prenatal genetic test was created through a proprietary method for selective isolation of fetal cells collected from a vaginal swab. The fetal cells collected in this noninvasive way contain the complete genetic profile of the fetus.

Down the Hatch Solutions, developed by Filiz Bunyak Ersoy, an assistant research professor in the Department of Computer Science, Zhihai "Henry" He, a professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Teresa Lever, an assistant professor in the Department of Otolaryngology. The clinical tool assesses laryngeal adductor reflex in diseases, cancer and congenital abnormalities. It helps clinicians visualize the entire larynx during endoscopic testing for this type of reflux.
MU researchers awarded $500,000 in grants

COLUMBIA - **Research grants totaling $500,000 were awarded Tuesday to MU researchers working to create products that could improve the lives of patients.**

Dr. Teresa Lever is the recipient of one of the grants. She is working on a tool to help identify patients with a swallowing disorder that are at the risk of getting pneumonia.

"This is helping us get our research to the next level to make this worthy of funding by external funding mechanisms," Lever said. "Without this money, I think the research would eventually get done because I'm overzealous about doing that, but it would take a lot longer time."

Other products awarded grants include osteoporosis treatments, the ability to store frozen corneas longer for transplants, a way to identify if a heart bypass was successful and a non-invasive way to evaluate the health of a fetus.

The University of Missouri’s Coulter Translational Partnership Program consists of teams of at least one clinician and an engineer.

Jinglu Tan, who helped decide the recipients of the award, said the clinician will generally identify the needs and potential application of the product. The engineer will lead the creation efforts. This all leads to getting the product on the market.

"It has really encouraged researchers and clinicians to think about applications, not just research in their labs," Tan said. "How can you translate your research into products that will benefit patients? The philosophy is, until you turn your research into a product that can be commercialized, you won't help the patients."

Tan said this happens from licensing the product to existing companies or a start-up. MU parts ways with the product after it attracts at least $500,000 from investors.
"It's an investment in researchers, and much more importantly it's an investment in economic development in the state because we are creating new companies and new jobs," Tan said.

Once commercialized, the companies bring in funds for the university from things like patents and licenses. Chapter 100.020 of the Collective Rules and Regulations said about 66 percent of funds derived from this category go toward the university, the department and the UM system.

The funding for grants under the Colter Program will end in mid-2017. A news release from the MU School of Medicine said the university will pick up the slack.

$500,000 per year for five years will be provided by a group of MU offices. Diamond Dixon, a spokesperson for University of Missouri Health Care, said the office of vice chancellor for research, the provost, medicine, engineering and tech management and industry relations will each pitch in thousands of dollars.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

University of Missouri System loses another leader

ST. LOUIS • The University of Missouri System lost a leader Tuesday, and this one is sort of a punch to the gut.

Brian Burnett, the chief financial officer for the system, joined the team under former President Tim Wolfe in June of 2014 from the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs.

He's headed off to take a similar job at the University of Minnesota, the school announced Tuesday.

Burnett is a Colorado Springs native. Preparing for the move to Columbia, Mo., Burnett said he had been watching Wolfe's worth and was motivated to apply and work with him. Wolfe left last November amid a so-called 'perfect storm' of racial issues and bickering between leaders.

In addition to the benefit of moving closer to his daughter, a defender on the University of Minnesota women's soccer team, Burnett is also getting a raise.

A spokesperson said Burnett will make $410,000 and his tentative start date is Nov. 17.

In a statement, Burnett thanked the Board of Curators and other leaders from the University of Missouri for the past few years.
"Marilyn and I have come to know and love the University of Missouri and Columbia and had no plans to leave, but the position at the University of Minnesota provided an exceptional opportunity with many benefits to our family," he said. "We are grateful to all the friends and colleagues who have generously reached out and made us feel welcome here."

**Burnett leaving UM to take finance post at University of Minnesota**

After a little more than two years on the job at the University of Missouri, Vice President for Finance Brian Burnett will be taking a similar job at the University of Minnesota.

Burnett will be senior vice president for finance and operations if the Board of Regents approves his appointment later this week, according to a University of Minnesota news release.

“I am excited about joining an outstanding institution and working to support the critical missions in research, outreach and educating the youth of our future,” Burnett said in the news release.

Burnett began his current job on Aug. 1, 2014. Prior to being hired at the University of Missouri, Burnett was senior executive vice chancellor for administration and finance at the University of Colorado-COLORADO Springs.

In a statement issued by the University of Missouri, Burnett said he had not intended to leave. Minnesota, he said, “provided an exceptional opportunity with many benefits to our family. We are grateful to all the friends and colleagues who have generously reached out and made us feel welcome here.”

Interim University of Missouri President Mike Middleton congratulated Burnett on his new position, and said an interim replacement will be named before Burnett’s departure on Nov. 17.

“Since 2014, Brian has been a valuable general officer at the University of Missouri System,” Middleton said. “We will miss his expertise and counsel, and we know that our loss is the University of Minnesota’s gain.”
MU Researchers Say Being “Neighborly” is Good for your Health

Watch the story: [http://mms.tveys.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=d0ff7a2e-03e8-4263-b6f9-4f5caebfae09](http://mms.tveys.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=d0ff7a2e-03e8-4263-b6f9-4f5caebfae09)

MU celebrates ability week with new initiatives

COLUMBIA - The MU Disability Center will implement several initiatives to make campus inclusive for students with disabilities.

"Creating and maintaining an inclusive campus starts with all of us," Interim Chancellor, Hank Foley said at the first State of Accessibility event.

The first change being made to MU’s campus are the renovations of Lafferre and Stewart Halls.

"The main entrances of these buildings aren't accessible for students with physical disabilities," ADA Compliance Manager Amber Cheek said.

Signs pointing students in the right direction to the ramp to enter Jesse Hall will not only be put on the outside of the building but the inside as well.
"There is only one entrance for students with physical disabilities and it's hard to find," Cheek said.

Handicap signs will be changed across all of MU's campus. Cheek said they will no longer show a stick figure just sitting in the chair, but will feature a figure that is in motion.

Cheek said the change is essential because it's important to show that students with physical disabilities aren't their disability.

A Digital Accessibility Initiative will be put in place as well.

Associate Director of Digital Communications Jason Rollins said the biggest change will be adding closed captioning to videos and in classroom settings to make it easier for students with learning disabilities to grasp the content.

"Ensuring access is as important to our digital campus as it is our physical campus," Rollins said.

MU student Naomi Collier said, "One key thing that they mentioned was this universal design for all students. It's cool to know that all these changes aren't just going to benefit one group of people."

The initiatives were announced as part of Ability Week, which aims to highlight diversity and contributions made by individuals with disabilities.

Renovations on Stewart Hall will be done in a year, renovations on Lafferre and sign changes will be done before Dec. 31.

MU blood drive aims nationally

COLUMBIA - The University of Missouri's annual homecoming blood drive has goals that reach beyond Columbia this year.

The university and the American Red Cross are teaming up for the thirty-first homecoming blood drive this week. The drive starts just a few days after Hurricane Matthew swept through the southeast coast of the U.S., killing more than 20 people.
"We've lost about 55 blood drives, which equates to about 1,800 units, in the southeast" said Craig Jackson, senior account manager for the Red Cross. "If we can go over our goal (at MU), it allows to help supply those hospitals in that area as well."

Since the drive started in 1985, the university has collected more than 100,000 pints of blood. And despite coming in under a set goal Monday, Jackson thinks donations will pick up over the next few days.

"Our goal was 1,150 (units). We came in around 1,058 units," Jackson said. "We really want to push today to try to make up missing that goal. I'm confident we can do it. Our second day seems to be a big one."

Those interested in donating blood are encouraged to sign up at www.donateblood.com. The blood drive is located at the Hearnes Center and lasts until Thursday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day.

**A Student Fee to Respond to Sexual Assault**

In what's believed to be a first, U of Maryland student government approves fee that would help fund university's overworked Title IX office.

**No MU Mention**

Students at the University of Maryland at College Park may soon pay an extra student fee to help cover the costs of the university's struggling office that investigates sexual assault.

The $34 fee, approved by the university's student government last month and reported by BuzzFeed News Tuesday, was widely criticized, with advocates saying it is highly unusual for students to fund services to combat sexual assault and ensure that their university remains compliant with federal law. But student leaders said this week that they felt they were left with no choice after the university failed to properly fund the office.

“By putting in a proposal to add an additional fee, that’s placing another financial burden on students,” A. J. Pruitt, the Student Government Association’s vice president of student affairs, told BuzzFeed. “It’s not something I’m excited about, but it gets us to fully funding the office in a short amount of time.”
Such a fee is indeed unusual. Erin Buzuvis, an expert on Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and director of the Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies at Western New England University, said she has never heard of an institution using a student fee to cover the costs of a Title IX office. Neither has the National Center for Campus Public Safety or the Clery Center for Security on Campus.

Some institutions have security fees to support campus police and security departments, as well as student health fees, which may be used to fund prevention and awareness campaigns related to sexual assault. But a college’s Title IX office is an administrative department whose existence is mandated by the U.S. Department of Education, and few -- if any -- rely on student fees.

The department’s Office for Civil Rights instructs colleges and universities to hire “a well-trained Title IX coordinator and to give that coordinator the authority and support necessary to do the job.” Maryland hired its first Title IX coordinator in 2014, joining many other colleges that have recently expanded or established such offices in response to regulatory pressure from the Education Department. "The University of Maryland has funded the Title IX office since its inception," said Crystal Brown, a university spokeswoman. "Annual budgets for this office have increased every year. Students have proposed a new fee to provide this office additional revenue, but it has not yet been voted on and [is] not yet final. We are supportive of the Student Government Association’s proposal, which, if approved, will supplement the existing budget and is a show of support for the important mission of the Title IX office."

The office currently has a budget of about $1 million per year. In a meeting with the university’s student government last month, Catherine Carroll, the university’s Title IX director, said her office was underfunded and overworked. She said little planning went into creating the office, meaning its staff has been forced “to build the ship while flying it.” The office doesn’t currently have a permanent home on campus.

In addition to investigating and resolving claims of sexual assault, the Title IX office also handles reports of all kinds of discrimination, including incidents of racial bias. In addition, the office works with student organizations to create awareness and prevention campaigns, provides programming during new student orientation, helps compile several reports each year on campus safety, and conducts training for faculty and staff. Carroll said the current amount of training, much of which is online, is inadequate and only in place so that the university remains in compliance with federal law.
The office has four investigators: three for sexual assault cases and one for reports of discrimination. Last year, Carroll said, her office received 148 sexual assault complaints, which led to 112 investigations. Such cases are, according to the Education Department, expected to take 60 business days to resolve. Carroll said with the office’s current level of staffing, the investigations at Maryland take, on average, 140 business days.

“That is not prompt,” Carroll said, describing the length of time as unacceptable. “And when people are experiencing crisis and trauma, the last thing you need is to drag it out.”

The caseload has grown so overwhelming, she said, that she has been hesitant to promote the office as a resource for students experiencing other kinds of discrimination, as she is afraid her staff cannot handle the additional work. The student fee, if approved by the university’s president and Board of Regents, would generate an additional $900,000 per year for the office, which would allow Carroll to hire a deputy and two additional investigators, as well as a manager of sexual assault prevention programming.

“This is just phenomenal to me,” Carroll said, discussing the fee at last month's meeting. “To me it’s historic that students are taking leadership on this issue and recognizing, ‘Wow, there is something we can actually do.’”