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Community Outreach Grants to Biomedical Research Centers

Biomedical research institutions function as integral members of the communities that their scientists call home. Now 19 of those research centers are receiving nearly \$10 million in new grants from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) to share some science with their communities.

Some, such as the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry in Rochester, New York, and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, will bring science to school children, families and teachers in the inner city. Others—West Virginia University School of Medicine in Morgantown, West Virginia; The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine; and the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, for example—will focus on students and teachers in isolated, rural communities. Minorities underrepresented in the sciences will benefit from programs run by the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina. The University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine; the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle; and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, will focus on helping teachers teach science better.

Standards and assessment play a key role. The Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine, for example, will create *Middle School LabLion* to help middle school teachers and students meet state and national science standards. The program builds on its successful LabLion project in elementary schools, supported by previous HHMI grants.

Nearly 300 medical schools, academic health centers, independent biomedical research institutions, and schools of dentistry, public health and veterinary medicine were invited to compete for the grants. HHMI challenged them to propose innovative ways to advance public understanding of science in their communities through programs targeting K-12 students and teachers. The Institute encouraged applicants to involve graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the outreach programs, in an effort to foster a commitment to public science education among the next generation of research scientists.

"These grants enable HHMI to encourage our colleagues at biomedical research centers to share the content and excitement of their research in novel ways with a broad array of the public," said Peter Bruns, HHMI vice president for grants and special programs. "The funded projects include formal and informal education as well as research experiences for students at many levels, from a variety of social and educational backgrounds."

The new grants range from \$337,768 to \$539,970. An additional \$422,930 has been set aside for an HHMI-led evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the programs.

Two previous rounds of grants to biomedical research institutions in 1994 and 1999 totaled \$23 million. The programs supported have reached more than 350,000 school children and nearly 16,000 teachers.

New awardees are: