

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO CREATE NEW CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA:
CENTER FOR IMMUNOLOGY AND IMMUNE-BASED DISEASES**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to establish a Center for Immunology and Immune-Based Diseases within the Carver College of Medicine.

Executive Summary: The purpose of the proposed Immunology and Immune-Based Diseases Center will be to promote basic immunology research, maximize productive collaborations, and enhance clinical translation to the treatment of immune-based diseases. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office. Creation of the Center does not require Board of Regents approval because currently the Center will not involve an annual institutional commitment of \$250,000 or more, as stated in the Board of Regents Policy Manual §6.08. However, the University is requesting Board approval because it is likely that the Center may grow beyond the annual institutional commitment threshold of \$250,000 or more. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to provide “educational excellence and impact” and “economic development and vitality.”

Background:

- ◇ **Need for Center.** The University of Iowa has a substantial number of internationally recognized, productive immunologists on its College faculty as well as a successful, NIH-funded immunology training program. However, the lack of a departmental home committed to immunology as a scientific research area, scarce resources to create incentives for departments to partner with immunology to promote the discipline, and a physical scattering of immunologists across many locations have been limitations. The Center will focus on the important role played by the immune system in most major human diseases, including heart disease, cancer, infectious disease, autoimmune and chronic inflammatory conditions, and others.
- ◇ **Center goals.** The primary goals of the proposed Center will be to address the limitations, promote the best possible basic research, maximize productive collaborations, and enhance translation to clinical application. The Center will also continue the record of training in immunology at the undergraduate, graduate, medical scientist training program, and postdoctoral fellow levels. Attaining these goals will result in enhancing the scholarly success and reputation of immunology at the university, competing more effectively for superior trainees and faculty recruits, attracting new external research support, and increasing the scientific and career satisfaction of Center participants.
- ◇ **Center structure and organization.** The Center will have a director who will assume oversight responsibility for all activities of the Center, promote and facilitate the functions of the Center, and work with other members and College leadership to generate ongoing financial support for the Center from external agencies, industry, and philanthropy. Two assistant directors will provide support to the director; the three will confer regularly with the Executive Committee of the Immunology Graduate Program and the principal investigators of the predoctoral and postdoctoral Immunology T32 grants. An External Advisory Board will be formed and include colleagues at peer institutions with experience operating Immunology centers, institutes, and departments. Center membership will be open to all faculty and staff scientists at the University of Iowa.

- ◇ Activities. The proposed Center will engage in the following activities – create a website to develop a Center identity and promote Center goals; create a “work in progress” venue for presentations from the laboratories to promote new collaborations between faculty, staff, and trainees; provide immunology retreats; and provide support for exploratory research.
- ◇ Relationship of proposed Center to University’s strategic plan. The proposed Center will focus on immunological approaches to disease, including infectious diseases, cancer, and aging. These areas are core missions of the College regarding the development of research programs and, therefore, support the College’s strategic plan. The proposed Center also supports the university’s strategic plan – (1) The discoveries and advancements in health care from the Center will benefit Iowans, a key component of the strategic plan. (2) The Center’s research focus will support the strategic plan goal of promoting the creation of knowledge by interfacing with the faculty cluster hire initiatives, such as the Obesity and Aging Mind and Brain clusters. (3) The Center will also provide opportunities, through external grants, to support and train graduate students and thereby advance the university’s education mission.
- ◇ Relationship of proposed Center to existing centers. It is likely that the proposed Center will interact strongly with the Diabetes Center, the Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center, and the new Obesity and Aging Mind and Brain cluster. A key element of the proposed Center is its interdisciplinary focus. The leadership has broad interests in many aspects of immunology and will serve as the catalyst to develop cross-disciplinary programs to support and enhance new research directions. Therefore, the Center will be well positioned to promote collaborative work among existing centers and institutes.
- ◇ Existence of proposed Center at other Iowa institutions. Similar institutes/centers do not exist elsewhere in Iowa. Other institutions cannot accommodate the required research facilities.
- ◇ Unique role of the University of Iowa to support the proposed Center. The University of Iowa is the ideal location for the proposed Center because of its commitment to immunology research and the critical mass of tools and talents already in place. The University’s innovative researchers have a proven track record of success. The cooperative culture encourages collaborative research at the boundaries of traditional disciplines where breakthroughs will occur.
- ◇ Resources. The Carver College of Medicine recognizes the importance of a physical home for the Center to enhance interactions and collaborations between the Center’s investigators. After the Pappajohn Biomedical Discovery Building is completed and established investigators are moved to the new space, the College will attempt to identify contiguous lab space for the Center’s investigators.

Space is considered a top priority to enhance interactions and collaborations that will add value in the form of new scholarship and external funds and to ensure that departments in which future immunologist recruits might have primary appointments have a strong incentive to work closely with Center leadership to build the future immunology community.
- ◇ Expected need. The proposed Center is expected to be in existence for the foreseeable future. Research is expected to continue for many years.

- ◇ Costs and funding sources. The cost of the proposed Center is expected to be \$200,000 per year for the next five years. The expected revenues for the proposed Center will be provided by the Carver College of Medicine.
 - ⇒ \$30,000 per year to support the center directors.
 - ⇒ Up to \$70,000 per year to support joint faculty recruitments.
 - ⇒ \$50,000 for pilot grant development.
 - ⇒ \$50,000 for website development, seminars, retreats, and secretarial support.

Center leadership will work with institutional leadership to develop a stable future budget sufficient to support key Center priorities that promote its goals. While there are no current NIH programs or planned initiatives to support immunology centers, Center leadership will actively seek future opportunities for such support. Center leadership will also seek industry-based support for appropriate Center activities.
- ◇ Recruitment. Center leadership will develop priorities for new immunology faculty recruitments and will be empowered by the College Dean to approach appropriate departments to initiate partnered recruitments. Recruitments will be designed to attract new faculty to the College and the Center to grow areas of expertise and promote multiple new collaborative efforts.
- ◇ Implementation. After obtaining Board approval, the Carver College of Medicine is prepared to implement the Center in January 2012.