



Vermont Genetics Network

IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence

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UVM RECEIVES \$16.5 MILLION GRANT TO FUND VERMONT GENETICS NETWORK, LARGEST IN UNIVERSITY HISTORY

The National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) at the National Institutes of Health has awarded a \$16.5 million grant to the University of Vermont and Judith Van Houten, George H. Perkins Professor of Biology and the grant's principal investigator, to fund a state-wide program called the Vermont Genetics Network (VGN), a scientific collaboration furthering biomedical research, education outreach, and infrastructure building between UVM and its five VGN partner institutions: Castleton State College, Johnson State College, Middlebury College, Norwich University, and St. Michael's College. The award is the largest single competitive research grant in UVM's history.

First established in 2001 through a \$6 million NCRR grant to the University of Vermont and its state partners, VGN is a multi-disciplinary scientific research network designed to build and strengthen biomedical research and expertise throughout the state. At the state level, 60 percent of the total VGN grant funds are distributed from UVM to the partner institutions. At the national level, VGN joins with a system of university and college networks funded by NCRR called the IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence, or INBRE.

A senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and longtime supporter of federal investments in medical research and public health, U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy praised the award and application, saying, "This grant illustrates the vitality of UVM's forward-thinking approach to research and development. Because the University has wisely adopted a collaborative approach to this work, Vermont's status as a leader in biomedical research will truly be a state-wide effort."

A partnership with



Castleton State College Johnson State College Middlebury College Norwich University Saint Michael's College





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UVM President Daniel Mark Fogel added, “We have done a good deal of thinking about what it means to be a 21st century land grant institution, and VGN provides just the kind of services

and outreach we feel UVM should be offering Vermont and Vermonters in the new millennium. Through the VGN’s multi-faceted programs, in concert with our partner undergraduate institutions, we’re having a significant impact on genetic research and science education in Vermont which, in turn, will benefit workforce development and job creation in the state.”

“The VGN grant benefits Vermont through its support of the baccalaureate institutions that play crucial roles in our higher education and workforce development, its creation of facilities at UVM and our partner institutions” said Van Houten, “The grant also enhances overall resources for biomedical research, which is key to many aspects of economic prosperity.”

Resources and cutting edge technology previously unavailable in Vermont

The VGN grant funding brings new resources and cutting edge technology to Vermont. Laboratory renovations, research equipment and supplies for the faculty and undergraduates at the network partner colleges are funded through the grant. In addition, the grant helps build biomedical research funding competitiveness at UVM by providing research support to early-career faculty and graduate students. This support can be instrumental in serving as a “pipeline” for young people to pursue health research careers.

New technologies that VGN is responsible for bringing to UVM and its partners include microarray and proteomics facilities and a bioinformatics core. The microarray facility provides a technology that allows researchers to look at as many as 15,000 genes simultaneously and zero in on specific ones, such as those involved in a disease process. The bioinformatics core is a constantly-evolving information network used to gather, store, analyze and integrate biological and genetic information gained from the microarray process and turn it into significant conclusions

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about how cells function. The proteomics facility makes mass spectrometry services available for high level protein analysis.

The technologies allow researchers at UVM and at the partner schools to do research they previously weren't able to undertake and become eligible for the increasing number of research grants that require access to these technologies.

Outreach to college classrooms

In addition to the work undertaken at each of the partner institutions, the VGN also has an active education outreach component. Once a week for eight weeks each semester, faculty and staff from UVM visit a classroom at an institution in Vermont and share the microarray and bioinformatics technologies with students and their professors. The team is currently visiting Castleton State College. To date, VGN has visited classrooms at Green Mountain College, Johnson State College, Middlebury College, Norwich University, and St. Michaels College.

"Bringing the capability of doing advanced biomedical research to undergraduates throughout the state is a key element of VGN," said Van Houten. "There's a good chance that, by exposing these young people to the challenge and excitement of this work, they'll be persuaded to continue with their studies and to become part of a highly skilled workforce in the state."

For more information about the Vermont Genetics Network, call (802)656-4087 or email Vermont.GeneticsNetwork@uvm.edu

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