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## **CIRM allocates \$38 million for programs to foster young scientists and fund basic stem cell discoveries**

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Irvine, Calif.—Today the governing board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, the state stem cell agency, approved future funding rounds worth \$38 million that would foster creativity and scientific innovation in high school students and fund basic stem cell discoveries.

The agency also approved \$30 million toward a program that will cultivate partnerships between stem cell scientists and biotech and pharmaceutical companies whose support and expertise will be needed as agency-funded programs move into later stage clinical trials.

These projects fulfill the agency's core mission of developing new stem cell-based therapies by bringing bright young people into the field, driving a better understanding of stem cell biology—information that is critical for creating safe, effective therapies—and creating relationships with industry that will bring regulatory expertise, business acumen and manufacturing resources to position promising stem cell therapies to be more likely to successfully advance through clinical trials.

Specifically, the concept approved for the fourth round of the Basic Biology Awards would fund up to 25 three-year awards worth up to a total of up to \$35 million. This investment in fundamental stem cell discoveries fuels the pipeline of future therapies and also provides insights that help scientists overcome barriers in the path to the clinic. More information about the role of basic science in the path to the clinic can be found on the CIRM web site [www.cirm.ca.gov/path-clinic](http://www.cirm.ca.gov/path-clinic). The request for applications will be posted to the CIRM web site in November.

The Creativity Awards concept approved today expands on the successful pilot program held during the summer of 2011, which supported high school students conducting stem cell research at four universities in California. A video produced by CIRM contains more information about the program and the research conducted by the students in the pilot program: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Gtfl6BzorY&](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Gtfl6BzorY&). The program will fund summer internships for high school students for three years at up to ten California Universities with established high school internship programs.

In addition to carrying out stem cell research, the supported students are strongly encouraged to carry out a project in a second discipline of their choice. Designed to inspire creativity in California's young scientists, the \$3 million program also has the aim of bringing in students who might not otherwise have the opportunity due to socioeconomic constraints. The request for applications will be posted on the CIRM website in November.

"Creativity arises when fresh minds engage in a space that has several influences. This program encourages young students to spend time in stem cell sciences and another discipline such as imaging, physics, music or engineering during their summer break. Regenerative medicine needs innovation driven by creative 'outside the box' thinking, and a fresh perspective," said Alan Trounson, CIRM president. "The experience of the initial program in 2011 has demonstrated the enthusiasm for this creative approach for a new way of enhancing stem cell science and that it will nurture creativity by an early exposure to cutting-edge medical research."

The \$30 million Strategic Partnership Funding Program approved today was devised by CIRM Management, in particular, Elona Baum as General Counsel and Vice President of Business Development, and was originally part of the \$30 million Opportunity Fund first approved by the governing board in June, 2011. After review, the Intellectual Property and Scientific Subcommittees recommended that the full amount originally designated for the Opportunity Fund be allocated solely to the Strategic Partnership Funding Program, with funding for the other programs encompassed in the Opportunity Fund to be addressed at a later date.

The Strategic Partnership Funding Program was designed to address a strong recommendation from the External Review Panel in 2010 to attract industry through a funding approach aligned with industry timelines and processes. This new program is a critical component of CIRM's efforts to engage industry and has three main objectives:

- Enhance the likelihood that CIRM funded projects will obtain funding for Phase III clinical trials
- Provide a potential source of co-funding in the earlier stages of clinical development
- Provide CIRM funded projects with access to pharmaceutical and large biotech partners that can provide valuable expertise in the

areas of regulatory, clinical trial design and manufacturing process development.

Jonathan Thomas, chair of the governing board, said forming relationships with industry is critical for the success of CIRM-funded programs. "The collaborations formed through this partnership program will accelerate therapies towards the clinic by advancing some of the most promising projects in the field," Thomas said. "Supporting biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies also creates jobs and tax revenue in California."

A program announcement will be posted on the CIRM web site, with applications accepted on a rolling basis.

The governing board also considered plans to update the agency's strategic plan to meet a shared vision and mission discussing key strategic items such as the strategic objectives, strategies to achieve them, and the rationale for any changes from the 2009/2010 plan .

As in previous years, CIRM is seeking stakeholder input from patients, patient advocacy organizations, researchers, members of industry, and other members of the public. The first public meeting was held October 25th in Los Angeles, and the second public meeting is set for October 31st in San Francisco. The dates/locations are posted on the CIRM website at [www.cirm.ca.gov/Meetings](http://www.cirm.ca.gov/Meetings), along with strategic plans from 2006 and 2009/2010 (both documents are available here: [www.cirm.ca.gov/about-cirm/our-publications/cirm-publications](http://www.cirm.ca.gov/about-cirm/our-publications/cirm-publications)).

Also at the meeting, the governing board approved a recommendation from the communications subcommittee to accept a plan that broadens the agency's communications efforts and consolidates communications under the direction of both Art Torres, vice chair of the governing board and chair of the communications subcommittee, and Ellen Feigal, senior vice president of research and development. The plan calls for hiring a Senior Director of Communications and Patient Advocacy Outreach to lead the expanded efforts.

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