



**NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

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**WASHINGTON STATE LIFE SCIENCES DISCOVERY FUND AWARDS  
HEALTH RESEARCH PROGRAM GRANTS**

SEATTLE, Washington, April 6, 2010—The Life Sciences Discovery Fund (LSDF) today announced nearly \$15 million in program grant awards to support collaborative research initiatives spearheaded by three Washington state life sciences organizations.

The programs will utilize diverse approaches to enhance the diagnosis and treatment of cancer and other major diseases.

One program, led by Stephen Friend of Sage Bionetworks, will use powerful computational tools to create better models of complex biological systems and identify molecular pathways that can be targeted to develop safer and more effective drugs and diagnostic tests.

A second program, headed by Thomas Matula at the University of Washington, will combine ultrasound technologies with cutting-edge molecular medicine approaches to more accurately image tumors and enhance drug delivery to diseased tissues.

The third program, directed by Peggy Porter of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, will establish a multi-institutional system for collecting and distributing the biological specimens required to advance cancer research, diagnosis, and therapy.

According to LSDF executive director Lee Huntsman, each award is anticipated to yield great returns on LSDF's investment. "These world-class teams will create critical information, material, and technological resources that are expected to provide competitive advantages to Washington's researchers and companies and, ultimately, accelerate the development of new diagnostics and therapeutics for serious health conditions." Huntsman also noted that LSDF support will further advance Washington's leadership positions in computational research, systems biology, and ultrasound.

The LSDF board of trustees selected the awardees from among 19 proposals that were evaluated by national experts convened by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In a highly competitive two-phase process, proposals were rated on scientific merit and the potential to improve health and health care in Washington and provide statewide economic benefit.

Funding for these awards comes from Washington's allocation of bonus payments under the Master Tobacco Settlement. The awards are subject to finalization of LSDF's budget for 2010 and the terms and conditions of a grant agreement negotiated between the recipient institutions and LSDF.

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*The Life Sciences Discovery Fund, a Washington state agency established in May 2005, makes grant investments in innovative life sciences research to benefit Washington and its citizens.*



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Life Sciences Discovery Fund 2009 Health Research Program Grants

#### **Stephen Friend, Sage Bionetworks - \$4,999,996**

Program Title: *Sage Integrative Bionetwork Community: Scalable Resource for the State of Washington*

Program Focus: To more accurately and comprehensively model biological systems through their network of interactions to develop safer and more effective drugs and diagnostic tests.

Human disease frequently causes complex changes in biological systems and molecular pathways, and, consequently, is often not treatable with individual drugs that target a single step in a pathway. Sage Bionetworks is a new nonprofit medical research organization that is developing a novel approach to biological and drug development research. Sage's approach uses powerful computational tools to create holistic models of biological systems that map interactions among the multiple pathways that can influence disease severity, drug efficacy, and drug safety. Sage will create the "Sage Commons" for open-access research on systems biology and network models and for the application of this research to biological problems and human disease. LSDF will fund two facets of the Commons: 1) the development and implementation of a computing infrastructure that will enable scalable delivery of network data models and analyses to collaborators, and 2) the creation of the Washington Partners Program, which will actively engage Washington's academic and biotechnology communities in next-generation systems biology research. By accelerating the identification of pathways that can be targeted to develop better drugs or diagnostic tests, the Sage Commons will provide Washington biotechnology companies with competitive advantages in drug and diagnostic development, help launch new companies and create jobs, and retain some of the world's best computational biologists in Washington.

#### **Thomas Matula, University of Washington - \$4,999,999**

Program Title: *Molecular Imaging and Therapy Using Ultrasound*

Program Focus: To develop, translate, and commercialize new ultrasound techniques for molecular imaging and therapy.

Ultrasound is one of the leading medical diagnostic tools in the world due to its high portability and low cost. More ultrasound procedures are performed than any other type of imaging, including X-rays, computed tomography (CT), and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). The

University of Washington (UW) and Washington companies are established leaders in biomedical ultrasound research, development, and commercialization. Ultrasound has traditionally been used for visualizing anatomical structures. However, combining ultrasound technologies with advanced molecular approaches could potentially revolutionize disease diagnosis and treatment by allowing clinicians to target specific molecules in tissues for more precise imaging as well as for delivery of drugs. The program team will create a center focused on researching, translating, and commercializing new ultrasound techniques for molecular imaging and therapy. The ultrasound-based Washington Molecular Imaging and Therapy Center will capitalize on the UW's existing expertise and initiatives as well as recruit new faculty and support novel research projects. Partnerships with clinicians, industry, and venture capitalists are anticipated to accelerate clinical translation and commercialization.

**Peggy Porter, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center - \$4,995,711**

Program Title: *Consortium Biospecimen Program (CBP)*

Program Focus: To facilitate cancer treatment through comprehensive biological specimen collection and distribution.

Development of molecular tests for early diagnosis of cancer and other diseases, as well as tests that enable treatments to be tailored to a patient's condition and new therapeutic technologies, are critically dependent on blood and tissue samples collected from patients and healthy individuals with their consent. To catalyze the development of new diagnostic tests and drugs, the investigators will develop an information-rich biospecimen collection and distribution system that links regional biomedical investigators with biological specimens. A cross-institution informatics platform will be developed, as well as standardized practices for materials transfer and intellectual property management. This new program will capitalize on the resources and expertise of two programs previously funded by LSDF, the Phase 1 Clinical Trials Program and the Northwest Institute of Genetic Medicine. The CBP represents a collaboration between patients and researchers that provides an opportunity for cancer patients, their families, and friends to contribute to basic science and exciting discoveries that may one day lead to cures. The Consortium includes Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, the University of Washington, and Seattle Children's Hospital and Research Institute.

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