TALLAHASSEE – Florida A&M University (FAMU) has been awarded $13.7 million in grants for five-years of support through the Research Center in Minority Institutions (RCMI) Program from the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD).

"The RCMI program at FAMU is designed to strengthen and expand biomedical research and research infrastructure in a major way," said Ken Redda, professor of medicinal chemistry and interim vice president for research. "Kudos is to Dr. Karam Soliman, Dr. Carl Goodman and their terrific team in generating this significant research funding from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. It is a bright day at FAMU."

The RCMI grant award for the period of 2013-2018 will support drug discovery and research aimed at better understanding the makeup and risks associated with various degenerative diseases and their treatment. The grant also will support projects in drug discovery, molecular genetics and biotechnology research. In the area of drug discovery, the grant will aid in developing new drugs that can be used for the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson’s; stroke; cancer (breast, prostate and lung); and emerging infectious diseases to uncover targets for therapy and translational research.

“FAMU and the College of Pharmacy have produced nine patents during the last 10 years and that is due largely in part to the support provided by the RCMI,” said principal investigator Karam Soliman. “FAMU is number one among HBCUs in terms of the number of patents we hold.”

The RCMI program serves the dual purpose of bringing more racial and ethnic minority scientists into mainstream research and promoting minority health research because many of the investigators at RCMI institutions study diseases that disproportionately affect minority populations. The RCMI program will have tremendous impact on various research disciplines (pharmaceutical sciences, biology, chemistry, environmental sciences, agricultural and engineering) graduate programs. With concentrations in pharmacology/toxicology, medicinal chemistry, pharmaceutics and environmental toxicology, the College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (COPPS) has graduated more than 60 percent of the African-American Ph.D. recipients in the pharmaceutical sciences nationally.

Since 1985, FAMU has received RCMI support continually in excess of $54 million, including construction funding for the research wing on the New College of Pharmacy building. RCMI also funded laboratory animal facility improvements that were instrumental in the COPPS-receiving national accreditation of its research animal facilities, making FAMU one of 500 accredited facilities from 3,500 colleges and universities. RCMI has provided critical infrastructure to enable the college to achieve
national prominence and become a competitive biomedical research center nationally. Since the inception of the RCMI Program at FAMU, the College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences has implemented four Ph.D. tracks in pharmaceutical sciences. In addition, the RCMI program has contributed significantly through the creation of advanced research core facilities that are available to all FAMU researchers, the recruitment of outstanding biomedical faculty members, and support for faculty development research projects.

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