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LSUHSC AWARDED \$5.5 MILLION TO DEVELOP VACCINE CENTER

New Orleans, LA – LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans will hold a press conference on Friday, June 15, 2007 at 11:30 a.m. in Room 563 of the Mervin L. Trail, MD Clinical Sciences Research Building at 533 Bolivar Street to discuss a multi-million grant that will consolidate and advance a new field of scientific expertise in Louisiana as well as economic recovery and growth.

“Alistair Ramsay, PhD, Professor and Director of the Gene Therapy Program at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans, has been awarded \$5.5 million by the Louisiana Board of Regents to develop the Louisiana Vaccine Center with an outstanding critical mass of participating investigators at several institutions in New Orleans,” says Larry Hollier, MD, Chancellor of LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans. “This application was ranked number one in the state by the Board of Regents from among 32 applicants in the biological, material and IT sciences.”

The goal of the center is to establish Louisiana as a center of excellence in vaccine research and development with appropriate infrastructure to support its future growth and expansion through large-scale national, international, and private funding, commercial and industrial partners, patents, licenses and royalties. The Louisiana Vaccine Center will also provide a cornerstone for any future regional enterprise that could ultimately consolidate vaccines and therapeutics R&D in the South. It will encompass all stages of vaccine development.

Capitalizing upon our research strengths and international reputation for research achievement in infectious diseases and vaccines, the new center will establish a coordinated approach to vaccine development.

“Investigators in New Orleans have justly earned an international reputation for research achievement in infectious disease, particularly in the related areas of microbial pathogenesis, host immunity, and vaccine research,” notes Dr. Ramsay, the grant’s principal investigator (PI) and an established expert in vaccine immunology currently targeting tuberculosis and HIV who also played a key role in the development of the important prime-boost vaccination strategy. “Working across several disciplines in different universities, these individuals have a long-standing history of successful interaction, collectively

representing one of the most significant regional research strengths. Collectively, they have won \$60 million in recent federal and commercial funding for Louisiana in these priority areas.”

These investigators include co-PIs John Clements, PhD, Professor and Chairman of Microbiology & Immunology at Tulane University’s Health Sciences Center, Seth Pincus, Professor of Pediatrics at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans and Director of the Research Institute for Children in New Orleans, and Tarun Mandal, PhD, Professor of Pharmacology at Xavier University.

Current research being conducted by the participating scientists targets tuberculosis, HIV, biodefense, group B streptococci, plant and bacterial toxins, including ricin, as well as nanoparticle development and sustained release for delivery of drugs and biologicals.

The Louisiana Vaccine Center will establish a framework for research and development in infectious diseases vaccines that will provide a focus for retention of established researchers and promising junior scientists; stimulate the recruitment of new scientific talent into the State; foster new collaborations between scientific institutions in Louisiana; assist the overall recovery of the research and educational missions and infrastructure at three institutions that sustained damage in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina; develop research projects and related academic activities in vaccine development that underpin education and training of new generations of students and postdocs in Louisiana; strengthen our capacity to compete for large-scale national and international research and development grants and contracts in vaccines, therapeutics and biodefense from the NIH and other US Government agencies, foundations, and industry; develop local infrastructure necessary for the development and clinical testing of novel vaccines for infectious diseases; promote interactions between basic and clinical researchers in development, testing and application of novel vaccines and therapies for infectious diseases in Louisiana and elsewhere; develop intellectual property in the form of patents and licenses; promote linkages with industrial partners both locally and nationally and establish new commercial and biotechnology opportunities in Louisiana; promote regional, national and international public health.

The grant is from the Board of Regents’ Post Katrina Support Fund Initiative. According to the Regents, the P-KSFI is designed to do more than simply provide funds for restoration to pre-storm capacity; it seeks to rapidly elevate achievement and catapult the

State beyond its pre-storm status, to the forefront of scientific research, development, and education. The goal of the P-KSFI is to build “towers of strength” in Louisiana scientific education and research in identified disciplines. P-KSFI resources may be used to aid in recovery of previously strong programs and/or provide resources to already competitive and nationally recognized programs to further their research and education missions with an eye toward building both scientific excellence and economic development opportunities.

LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans’ six professional schools educate the majority of Louisiana’s health care professionals. Louisiana’s flagship academic health center, LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans comprises a medical school, the state’s only school of dentistry, Louisiana’s only public School of Public Health, and schools of allied health professions, nursing, and graduate studies. LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans students are Louisiana residents. Its faculty are in the vanguard of biosciences research in a number of areas in a worldwide arena. Its faculty, residents, and students take care of Louisianans, including the medically indigent and under-served, in hospitals and clinics and through outreach programs throughout Louisiana. Pre-Katrina, LSUHSC had an annual economic impact on the New Orleans area in excess of \$1 billion. # # #

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