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SLAS Establishes an Endowed Fellowship for Novel Drug Development Research at the University of California Los Angeles

CHICAGO—June 12, 2012—The Society for Laboratory Automation and Screening (SLAS) announced that it has established an Endowed Fellowship at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) to support novel and innovative cancer research initiatives that are aligned with the scientific focus of the Society.

Through the SLAS Endowment Fund, SLAS will support a new UCLA School of Dentistry research program based on the development of novel technologies that serve as vehicles for therapeutic molecular compounds. The research team will perform algorithm-driven feedback analysis to identify optimal combinations of nanodiamond-drug complexes, analogous to screening, in order to realize compounds that are capable of simultaneously maximized efficacy and safety. The UCLA team will be led by Professor Dean Ho, PhD (who begins his tenure with the UCLA School of Dentistry on July 1, 2012) in collaboration with Professor Cun-Yu Wang, DDS, PhD, who is the No-Hee Park Endowed Professor and Chair of Oral Biology and Medicine at the UCLA School of Dentistry, and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science who was recently honored with election to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies.

“UCLA is deeply committed to working in partnership with SLAS to support this internationally-recognized innovation in novel drug development,” says No-Hee Park, DMD, PhD, Dean and Distinguished Professor of the UCLA School of Dentistry. “Our school is very excited for the recruitment of Professor Dean Ho, a world class scholar.” Dr. Wang adds, “This generous fellowship from SLAS will bring Dean and me together to address some important questions in cancer therapeutics and train a new generation of scientists.”

According to Professor Ho, “The project involves the screening for and development of novel therapeutic compounds for the co-suppression of inflammation and tumor growth using a multi-functional nanodiamond-drug complex. Because it is believed that dual therapy against inflammation and cancer can mediate significantly enhanced treatment outcomes, the combinatorial screening for optimal drug combinations that are nanodiamond-modified to overcome chemoresistance may result in transformative advancements in the field.”
This SLAS award is the first to be made from the SLAS Endowment Fund. Originally established by the Society of Biomolecular Sciences (SBS) prior to its merger with the Association for Laboratory Automation (ALA) to form the Society for Laboratory Automation and Screening (SLAS), the fund’s purpose is to provide start-up funding for research projects with the potential to advance the disciplines, technologies, and skills involved in screening and molecular discovery, including support of graduate and undergraduate training in these areas. An initial $100,000 commitment to UCLA will be reviewed and reconsidered after five years.

“The SLAS Endowment Fund is an important component of our organization,” says SLAS President Dave Dorsett. “It broadens our reach and impact in the scientific community, and it speaks directly to our mission to provide forums for education and information exchange to encourage the study of, and improve the science and practice of, laboratory automation and screening.”

“SLAS is extremely proud to be associated with UCLA and this ambitious new research program,” Dorsett continues. “A state-of-the-art cancer research facility is being established at the UCLA School of Dentistry Yip Center for Oral/Head & Neck Oncology Research to house this initiative. In addition, UCLA is home to the Jane and Jerry Weintraub Center for Reconstructive Biotechnology, which provides an environment in which translational/clinical trial research can be accomplished. These are highly unique facilities that promote multidisciplinary collaborations.”

“The laboratory science and technology embraced through this impressive initiative will be of great interest to current and future SLAS members,” says SLAS CEO Greg Dummer. “Our entire scientific community will benefit from developments published in our scientific journals, at our annual conferences and on our website. In the meantime, we welcome the opportunity to have a positive impact on the undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral students who will have hands-on involvement in the project and hope that we’ll see them emerge as our Society’s next generation of scientific leaders.”

“As the SLAS Endowment Fund grows, SLAS looks forward to being able to support other meaningful new research initiatives across the U.S. and around the world,” says Dorsett. An application process will be announced at a later date at SLAS.org.

For more information, contact SLAS Global Headquarters at +1.877.990.SLAS (5727).

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The Society for Laboratory Automation and Screening (SLAS) is an international community of more than 15,000 individual scientists, engineers, researchers, technologists and others from academic, government and commercial laboratories. The SLAS mission is to be the preeminent global organization providing forums for education and information exchange and to encourage the study of, and improve the practice of laboratory science and technology. For more information, visit www.SLAS.org.