

PRESS RELEASE

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FSU College of Medicine Helps Land \$1.2 Million Geriatrics Grant

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Health care for the elderly in northern Florida, southern Alabama and southern Georgia is about to get better with a \$1.2 million Geriatric Education Center grant involving departments at Florida State University, Florida A&M University and the University of South Alabama. The FSU College of Medicine department of geriatrics led a collaborative effort with other colleges, schools and departments at FSU, FAMU and USA to obtain the three-year grant to fund a network collectively referred to as the Live Oak GEC. The consortium will provide geriatrics training at various sites in the Panhandle, southwest Georgia and southeast Alabama for providers in professions such as medicine, nursing, pharmacy, rehabilitation therapies and social work. Older patients are the highest users of health care services, medications, nursing home stays and hospitalizations, yet health-care providers of all types have received inadequate training in geriatrics. Each of the three states involved in the GEC has fewer geriatricians per capita than the national average. And like the rest of the country, the region faces severe shortages of nurse practitioners, pharmacists, social workers and other allied health professionals with special training in geriatrics. "While it is unlikely there will ever be enough geriatric specialists in every field of health care, an achievable goal is to ensure that all providers have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to provide quality care for older people," said Dr. Kenneth Brummel-Smith, GEC project director and the Charlotte Edwards Maguire professor and chair of the FSU College of Medicine's department of geriatrics. Funded by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration, Geriatric Education Centers serve local communities by strengthening multidisciplinary training of health professionals in assessment, chronic disease syndromes, care planning and cultural competence unique to older Americans. Since 1985, GECs nationwide have trained more than 450,000 health care professionals from all disciplines to better serve the rapidly expanding older adult population. About 50 funded Geriatric Education Centers, including another in Florida at the University of Miami, have been reestablished under recently renewed federal funding. The Live Oak GEC will differ from the others by focusing on health-care providers that serve rural and urban underserved and minority elders. FSU College of Medicine regional campuses are among the sites where training will take place. While initially the GEC will seek to educate faculty in the participating institutions, ultimately these trained faculty will help strengthen the geriatrics expertise of providers in their own local health-care communities collaborating as interdisciplinary teams. In particular, the FSU College of Medicine will be

offering expanded geriatrics training opportunities to affiliated community physicians in all specialties and to other health-care professionals at the regional campuses. FSU's participating departments include the lead institution, the College of Medicine, and the College of Social Work. In addition, faculty from the department of Food, Nutrition, and Exercise Sciences of the College of Human Sciences; the department of Communication Disorders of the College of Communication; the College of Education and the Pepper Institute for Aging and Social Policy are involved. Partners from FAMU are the School of Allied Health Sciences, the School of Nursing and the College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. The partner at the University of South Alabama is the College of Nursing. Brummel-Smith previously served as the medical director of the Oregon Health Sciences University GEC and as president of the American Geriatrics Society. Dr. Alice Pomidor, associate project director, is an associate professor of geriatrics at FSU and previously served as primary faculty in the Western Reserve GEC in Ohio. general surgeons in Broward, Orange and Polk counties said they intend to leave or significantly reduce practice within five years. In Polk County, more than 21 percent of surgical specialists, anesthesiologists and pathologists also are planning to leave or significantly reduce practice by 2012. Statewide, an average of more than 14 percent of respondents indicated a similar planned reduction or departure from all of the following specialties: radiology, surgical specialties, family medicine, pathology, emergency medicine, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology and general surgery.