

PRESS RELEASE

August 1, 2005

FSU College of Medicine Helps Land \$2 Million Geriatrics Grant

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By Nancy Kinnally

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.- Health care for the elderly in northern Florida, southern Alabama and southern Georgia is about to get better through a new \$2 million Geriatric Education Center involving departments at Florida State University, Florida A&M University and the University of South Alabama. Older patients are the highest users of health care services, medications, nursing home stays and hospitalizations, and yet health-care providers of all types have received inadequate training in geriatrics. Each of the three states involved in the new 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 in 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 multi-disciplinary 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. 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 five-year grant. Together, the consortium will provide training in geriatrics for providers in professions such as medicine, nursing, pharmacy, rehabilitation therapies and social work. About 35 funded Geriatric Education Centers are operating in the United States, including two in Florida, which are located at the University of Miami and the University of South Florida. FSU's Live Oak GEC will differ from the others by focusing on health-care providers that serve rural and urban underserved and minority elders. In addition to the Panhandle and the areas of Georgia and Alabama bordering the Panhandle, training will take place through the regional campuses of FSU's College of Medicine in Orlando, Pensacola and Tallahassee and is expected to expand to the new medical school's new Sarasota campus. While initially the GEC will seek to educate faculty in the participating institutions, ultimately these trained faculty will help strengthen the geriatrics expertise of other providers in their own local health-care communities. 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, as well as the School of Nursing 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, the College of Information, and the Pepper Institute for Aging and Social Policy are involved. Partners from FAMU are the School of Allied Health Sciences 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.