

PRESS RELEASE

Two Florida State University Professors Receive State Research Grant

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By Jennifer Schmidt

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.- Two Florida State University researchers are among the recipients of 19 biomedical research grants announced recently by Gov. Jeb Bush. Of the \$9.2 million granted to biomedical research in Florida, a combined \$881,000 was given to FSU's two recipients: Teng Ma of the Florida A&M/FSU chemical engineering department and Yanchang Wang of the FSU College of Medicine.

Ma hopes to improve the treatment of heart disease caused by smoking through vascular tissue engineering. Ma's team has successfully used cells from a pig's small intestine to grow primary human smooth muscle cells in cultures. Ma will examine the tissue from these cultures to test the usefulness of pig small intestine for growing blood grafts outside a patient's body. The long term objective is to fully restore the functions of diseased or injured blood vessels by implanting the grafts grown in the lab.

Wang's project is testing the "DNA damage checkpoint" function of an enzyme originally discovered by Nobel Laureate Lee Hartwell to find causes and treatment for cancer. Wang's team has preliminary data indicating that the enzyme, phosphatase 2A, is required to stop cell division when damaged DNA is present in budding yeast. With the state research grant, Wang will try to answer why and how phosphatase 2A is required to stop cell division. The study will provide useful information for human cancer treatment, as phosphatase 2A is also present in human cells. The grants were made available through the James and Esther King Biomedical Research Program. Bush recently signed legislation that adds \$6 million to the program each year and allows multi year grants to biomedical researchers in Florida.