

UF receives \$17.5 million to speed discoveries toward better health

by **Claire Baralt, UF**

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The [University of Florida Clinical and Translational Science Institute](#) has been awarded \$17.5 million to continue to pave the way for a swifter and more collaborative journey from research to improved health in the nation's third largest state.

Florida State University joins UF as a community research partner on the four-year award, which is funded by the National Institutes of Health's Clinical and Translational Science Award, or CTSA, program. Led by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, the program supports a nationwide network of approximately 60 CTSA hubs that develop, demonstrate and disseminate advances in translational science, a field devoted to turning research discoveries into new approaches that improve health.

“Renewed CTSA funding allows us to galvanize new teams and opportunities to accelerate the translation of research into improved patient care at UF Health and statewide,” said [David R. Nelson, M.D.](#), assistant vice president for research at UF and director of the UF CTSI. Nelson leads the institute with co-director [Betsy A. Shenkman, Ph.D.](#), chair of the [department of health outcomes and policy in the UF College of Medicine](#) and director of the [Institute for Child Health Policy](#).

In 2009, UF became the state's first recipient of a Clinical and Translational Science Award and remains one of only two awardees in the state, with the University of Miami receiving a CTSA in 2012.

The UF CTSI leads programs that develop new capabilities for research and translation to practice, offers education and training programs for research teams, and provides services and resources to facilitate research, such as pilot funding, data tools and specialized facilities. An economic impact analysis completed in 2013 found that every \$1 of UF CTSI operating expenditures helped spur an additional \$11 in external funding awards, with total spending on CTSA operations supporting an estimated \$1.1 billion in economic activity in Florida.

During the initial award, CTSA programs developed new methods and technologies in areas including biostatistics, epidemiology, community engagement and health outcomes research. CTSA-supported research teams made significant advances along the full continuum of translational research — from preclinical to clinical to population health sciences.

At the molecular level, for example, the CTSA helped unite expertise and resources to form UF's Southeast Center for Integrated Metabolomics, one of six such NIH-funded centers in the country. In the clinical arena, the CTSA-led [UF Health Personalized Medicine Program](#) successfully implemented a process for genetic testing that helps cardiologists identify which patients may not respond to traditional anticoagulating medications, with improved outcomes for patients who are treated with an alternative

medication. At the population level, the CTSI is working with FSU, the University of Miami, community stakeholders and clinical collaborators to develop the [OneFlorida Clinical Research Consortium](#). The OneFlorida vision first began to take shape in 2010, when FSU's College of Medicine teamed up with the UF CTSI to develop new capabilities for community-based clinical research.

“We look forward to deepening our work with the UF CTSI and our 2,500 faculty physicians to aid in discovery and translation of the best scientific evidence into everyday clinical practice in communities throughout the state, and to give our medical students early exposure to research experiences,” said Myra Hurt, Ph.D., senior associate dean for research and graduate programs at the FSU College of Medicine.

Over the next four years, the UF CTSI will lead further development of the OneFlorida consortium and a research agenda that emphasizes the health priorities and diversity of Florida's 20 million people. The institute will chart new pathways for translational workforce development, embed translational science in health systems and physician practices, and accelerate the collective impact of the national CTSA network and the research studies it supports.

To meet the growing demand for a workforce with the skills to lead and contribute to translational team science in a variety of environments, the CTSI will reshape how it supports development of careers in science. The CTSI will provide students and scholars an opportunity to explore career tracks not just in academic medicine, but also in community engagement and clinical research navigation, industrial biotechnology, technology transfer and entrepreneurship, research education and outreach, and regulatory science and government. The CTSI will offer a CTSA KL2 career development program for junior faculty and a CTSA TL1 training program for Ph.D. students. The KL2 and TL1 program awards are led, respectively, by principal investigators [Thomas A. Pearson, M.D., Ph.D.](#), M.P.H., executive vice president for research and education at UF Health, and [Wayne T. McCormack, Ph.D.](#), a professor in the [UF College of Medicine](#).

Within UF Health, the CTSI will expand its work at the intersection of research and patient care. The CTSI's 14,000-square-foot Clinical Research Center will serve UF's growing portfolio of clinical trials involving participants across the lifespan. In tandem, the CTSI will partner with UF's health system and FSU to integrate evidence-based health interventions into clinical practice.

The CTSI also will expand UF Health's Consent2Share program, which offers patients an opportunity to allow UF researchers to contact them about research studies for which they might be eligible based on information in their electronic health record. To date, more than 21,500 patients have agreed to participate in Consent2Share, which was recognized by the Association of American Medical Colleges with a 2014 Learning Health System Champion Award.

“By bridging the clinical, research, education and community engagement missions of our academic health center, the CTSI increases the exchange of ideas and knowledge to create a learning health system environment,” said [David S. Guzick, M.D., Ph.D.](#), senior vice president for health affairs at UF and president of UF Health. “The CTSI and its work over the next four years will play a central role in realizing the vision set forth in UF Health's new strategic plan, the Power of Together.”

Institutional support more than doubles the resources available for the CTSI's efforts, reflecting its role as a research hub that mobilizes teams and engages participants across the university, state and nation.

CTSI programs spurred multidisciplinary preeminence initiatives in metabolomics, genomic medicine, biomedical informatics, translational communication research and social network analysis.

“With its mission to accelerate translational science across all disciplines, disease areas and populations, the CTSI has created an environment that breeds collaboration not only at UF but across the state and country. This culture of collaboration will continue to fuel scientific progress over the next four years,” said [David P. Norton, Ph.D.](#), vice president for research at UF.

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Claire Baralt joined the UF Health Science Center Office of News & Communications in 2011 as the UF Clinical and Translational Science Institute’s Assistant Director, Communications. Baralt brings more than a decade of communications and strategic planning experience to her role at UF. Over the course of 11 years, she served as the Communications Officer and Assistant Corporate Secretary for the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, a \$1.6 billion national foundation supporting five grant-making programs and three properties. Prior to that, she worked in the White House Social Office, where she provided writing, editing and logistical support for events that included the America’s Millennium celebration. Baralt holds a master’s degree in strategic communications from Columbia University and bachelor’s degrees from UF in magazine journalism and advertising. She earned honors for her master’s thesis project, a consulting assignment to develop a communications strategy for improving the recruitment of African-American adoptive parents.