

## **HSU gets \$1.6 million for stem cell training**

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By John Driscoll

Humboldt State University expects to get \$1.6 million in state bond funds to start a stem cell course and send students to two leading universities for internships in regenerative medicine research.

The money comes through a California Institute for Regenerative Medicine grant, part of \$17.5 million for universities and research institutions in the state. It's part of a larger effort to train a workforce for the stem cell field, which recently enjoyed a relaxation of federal limits on funding for regenerative medicine by order of President Barack Obama.

Most of the money received by HSU would go toward paying for internships at Stanford University and the University of California San Francisco. The rest will go toward building a general education course in stem cell and regenerative medicine.

HSU Biology Professor Amy Sprowles said that the money will create a great opportunity for any undergraduate. With a strong cellular science and microbiology curriculum, HSU has previously lacked the ability to place students in internships at the highest-level universities, Sprowles said. The ability to land year-long internships at those schools will be attractive to students when they consider HSU, she said.

"That's the nice piece this grant will provide," Sprowles said.

Another course is being developed for the College of the Redwoods.

Northern California is the center of the universe for life sciences, with some 1,300 biotech firms that have been buoyed by state support.

The stem cell funding is just a small slice of the pie -- but an important one, said Travis Blaschek-Miller, a spokesman for BayBio, a nonprofit trade association.

"By getting a slice of that, I think it's positioning communities to prepare a workforce to develop, research and produce life-saving treatments and cures," Blaschek-Miller said.

The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine was formed in 2005 out of Proposition 71, and has put out more than \$635 million into stem cell research, according to an HSU press release.

Lack of a trained workforce -- cited in a BayBio survey -- is a key problem in the life sciences field, said Don Gibbons, a spokesman for the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine.

"This effort clearly addresses that concern," Gibbons said.

Sprowles added that HSU will also be adding an embryonic stem cell laboratory methods course beginning this fall. Because of the controversy surrounding the use of some human stem cells, the course will mainly focus on stem cells from mice.

The human embryonic stem cells the lab will use, Sprowles said, are only of the lines that were approved by former President George W. Bush's administration.