



Stem cell grant on the way to SJSU

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Campuses in the California State University system will receive about \$16 million for stem cell research, one of the first grants after President Barack Obama's lift on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research.

Embryonic stem cells are the beginning cells where all tissues are formed and research in the sector has been opposed due to many seeing it as destruction of human life, as embryos are destroyed in the process of extracting the stem cells, according to WebMd.com.

The California Institute of Regenerative Medicine, a state agency created in 2005 as part of Proposition 71, will be providing the funds. SJSU and San Francisco State University are two of the 10 state universities receiving a grant, with about \$1.7 million awarded to each university.

"It's cool to see SJSU be a part of this research," said Emily Benstead, a sophomore nursing major. "We're involved with a project with other schools such as Stanford and UC Berkeley."

According to a news release, the grant money was approved in January, but had bond sale issues hold up its distribution. The grant will allow for the development of new courses on stem cell research that will be available to biology and graduate students, said John Boothby, chairman of SJSU's biological sciences department.

SJSU graduate students will receive stipends for completion of internships at local or private research labs, Boothby said.

"Our school is in the middle of all these high-tech companies," said Khang Phan, a senior civil engineering major. "Students benefiting from the grant will give back in the future

when they work for San Jose."

Universities such as UC Berkeley will receive \$34 million while UC San Francisco will receive almost \$83 million. Stanford University will receive about \$101 million.

According to a January report by BayBio, a nonprofit trade association, California will face a shortage of trained professionals in the life science field, especially lab technicians. State Sens. Gloria Romero (D-Los Angeles) and Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) have introduced a proposal to incorporate stem cell science in the K-12 curriculum.

One student was opposed to stem cell research.

"Stem cell research is a really sensitive subject," said Jonathan Ania, a freshman business major. "I believe embryos are human beings, even if they're not fully developed yet. Who says it's OK to destroy those for science?"

Boothby said a course on the general ethics surrounding stem cell research will be open to all students.

One biology student was happy with the grants.

"As a future biology researcher, I'm happy to see science allowed to do what it's supposed to do," said Thao Le, a senior biology major. "And I'm glad SJSU is a part of it."

President Obama has given the National Institutes of Health 120 days to determine guidelines for scientists who will be applying for grants to research the hundreds of acquired stem cell lines, many with marked genes for diseases such as diabetes and Parkinson's, according to the group's Web site.