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Furman University

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Generous grants will support CTEV, research in sciences

With the help of two significant grants, Furman's scientific research efforts and its Center for Theological Exploration of Vocation have received major boosts to their already thriving programs.

Furman is one of seven institutions in South Carolina that will share in a \$17.3 million federal grant from the National Institutes of Health to bolster biomedical research and expand educational opportunities for undergraduates in the state. Furman will receive more than \$2 million in NIH support by 2010, which makes this grant the largest single federal award for research in the university's history.

The University of South Carolina is the lead institution for the grant. Besides Furman, other schools participating are the College of Charleston, the Medical University of South Carolina, and Clafin, Clemson and Winthrop universities. Each school will match its portion of the grant, bringing the total funding package to nearly \$35 million.

Andrew Sorensen, president of the University of South Carolina, says the award will expand the state's research opportunities in bioengineering and provide undergraduate students with valuable educational experiences through research projects with top scientists.

"The S.C. Centers for Economic Excellence have targeted bioengineering as a key area for the economic development of our state," he says. "This award recognizes the caliber of scientific research at our colleges and universities and gives us the opportunity to develop bioengineering research programs that will make us competitive nationally for other funding."

John Wheeler of the Furman chemistry department was principal investigator for the university's grant application and will serve as the project director over the next five years. Furman's research efforts are expected to focus on molecular biology and biochemistry related to neuroscience and cancer therapy.

Wheeler says, "Furman is investing considerable matching resources for the grant, which means the impact of the funding will be realized in as many related areas as possible." He adds that the grant will benefit at least four Furman departments — psychology, biology, chemistry, and health and exercise science — that have research interests in NIH-fundable biomedical areas. In all, the



Furman students visit friends at William Carey Baptist Church in Havana during the 2005 Center for Theological Exploration of Vocation service-learning trip.

award is expected to support the work of nearly 20 Furman professors and more than 60 undergraduates.

In addition, Furman will use a portion of the grant to help fund open faculty positions in the psychology and chemistry departments.

■ Furman's Center for Theological Exploration of Vocation, which supports students and others interested in the issues of faith and calling, has received a \$455,364 grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. to continue its work.

The CTEV was established in January of 2001 with a \$2 million grant from the Lilly Endowment. Since then, the center has offered seminars and courses, sponsored a yearly lecture series, developed a Summer Theology Institute for entering freshmen, and led intergenerational service-learning trips to Cuba. The center also provides resources for the Greenville community through public lectures and community service projects, as well as through its partnership with the Nexus Laity Institute, an ecumenical theological education project.

"We were very excited to learn that

we had received the grant, and we are encouraged by the Lilly Endowment's affirmation of our programs," says Elaine Nocks, professor of psychology and director of the CTEV. "We have been inspired by the many students, faculty, staff and alumni who have explored with us their sense of calling, and we look forward to moving ahead with a new vision for the center."

Founded in 1937, the Lilly Endowment is an Indianapolis-based private family foundation that supports its founders' wishes by supporting the causes of religion, community development and education. In the past five years the endowment has provided more than \$175 million to 88 colleges and universities to support programs that "encourage students, faculty and staff to engage in theological reflection on the purposes and character of their lives and work."

To learn more about the work of the CTEV at Furman, visit the Web at www.furman.edu/lilly.