



Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor / Jack Lavin, Director

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University Of Chicago Named As Biodefense Hub *Eight Research Centers Will Be Focal Point For Nation'S Biodefenses*

CHICAGO -- Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today welcomed the news that the University of Chicago has been named by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as one of eight grantees to establish regional biodefense research centers. The University of Chicago is the lead institution of a 14-member consortium from the Midwest that will study infectious diseases and develop both plans and products to defend against them.

"This is strong validation of Illinois and the Midwest's growing importance in the biotechnology industry, and specifically in the area of biodefense," said Governor Blagojevich. "One of Illinois' greatest strengths is the depth of its educational institutions and research facilities and this announcement is further recognition of that fact. I want to extend my congratulations to the University of Chicago and all of its partners for their efforts to secure this project."

The grant funds are being obtained through the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The grants for all of the centers total nearly \$350 million over five years with the University of Chicago consortia to receive approximately \$40 million during that time period.

In addition to the University of Chicago, Illinois based members of the consortium include Argonne National Laboratory, Batelle Memorial Institute, Illinois Institute of Technology, Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

"Illinois is uniquely poised to take advantage of the potential commercializations that will result from the research conducted at this center," said Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin. "With our statewide Illinois Technology Enterprise Centers and the establishment of a statewide Entrepreneurial Center network, we can encourage entrepreneurs and high-growth companies in the biotech sector to coordinate with the participating research center institutions in

bringing products to market that will help protect the public and support our economy."

Each of these centers will serve a geographical region and be the focal point to organize and promote linkages with pharmaceutical and biotech companies, with federal, state, and local agencies and with other qualified investigators to foster research and promote use of the core facilities by a broad range of qualified scientists. In times of national biodefense emergency, the Center will rapidly realign its activities to assist local response efforts within the region. This includes making core facilities and other resources available to assist in the implementation of biodefense plans.

Illinois institutions and their partners have submitted proposals that are currently under consideration by NIH for the construction of two biocontainment laboratories, another key component of NIH's Biodefense Strategic Plan.

"The establishment of this biodefense research center at the University of Chicago is a clear indication of this region's strength in biotechnology and related areas, so I encourage our Illinois institutions and their partners to continue these collaborations on major federal projects that bring millions of research dollars into the region," added the Governor.

[<-- Back to Index](#)

[<-- Close Window](#)