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Biomechanics Research Team Secures Largest Research Grant in UNO History

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contact: Charley Reed

email: unonews@unomaha.edu

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Omaha – The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) has been designated as the home for the world’s first Center for Research in Human Movement Variability thanks to a \$10.1 million grant from the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**. The grant is the largest research grant in university history and places UNO at the forefront of a rapidly expanding area of scientific research.

Under the leadership of **Nick Stergiou, Ph.D.**, UNO’s new research center will further the work of UNO biomechanical researchers in developing new treatments for patients recovering from movement-affecting disorders such as stroke and autism.

The new UNO center is part of NIH’s **Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE)** program - one of the most competitive grant programs in the country, with less than 15 percent of applicants receiving funding.

“Receiving this award means that the federal government considers UNO a research institution with doctoral level education that can produce excellent biomedical research,” Stergiou explained. “It allows us to realize the potential of UNO and the **Biomechanics Research Building** by establishing a global reputation as an outstanding research institute in biomechanics.”

The new research center will be housed in UNO’s Biomechanics Research Building, a first-of-its-kind, \$6 million research facility that opened last September. Part of the grant funding will allow several faculty members currently housed in the Biomechanics Research Building to dedicate their time entirely to specific research projects tied to the treatment of movement-affecting disorders.

Specific research will address how bodies control and adjust movement patterns and how variability in movement can be tied to, cause or be symptomatic of a number of wide-ranging disorders including, but not limited to autism, peripheral arterial disease and stroke. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), these disorders affect millions in the United States each year.

Funding will be distributed over five years, with two opportunities to renew for matching funds. The total potential for funding exceeds \$30 million.

Current UNO research projects planned for the grant include Sara Myers, Ph.D., who will study levels of variability in Peripheral Arterial Disease patients; Mukul Mukherjee, Ph.D., who will study how virtual reality can assist mobility in stroke victims; and Anastasia Kyvelidou, Ph.D., who will explore how variations in child posture can help detect early signs of autism.

“Because of this award, we anticipate that we will absolutely transform the research culture at UNO by augmenting assets within the university, thereby leading to success in several fields other than biomechanics,” Stergiou said.

As part of the grant, UNO researchers will partner with scientists and doctors from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) in order to provide real world, clinical applications for UNO research.

Funding from the grant will also allow for the hiring of several new faculty for UNO, the launching of additional pilot research programs, upgrades to equipment within the Biomechanics Research Building and recruitment of top graduate and undergraduate student candidates to come to Omaha and study biomechanics at UNO.

“Securing this COBRE grant makes biomechanics a priority not only for Omaha but for the state of Nebraska,” Stergiou explained.

Prior to the COBRE grant, UNO’s Biomechanics program had received millions in grant funding from other top government institutions including the National Science Foundation, NIH, NASA, and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

For questions, please contact Charley Reed, UNO media relations coordinator, at 402.554.2129 or by email at unonews@unomaha.edu.

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Located in one of America’s best cities to live, work and learn, the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) is Nebraska’s premier metropolitan university. With more than 15,000 students enrolled in 200-plus programs of study, UNO is recognized nationally for its online education, graduate education, military friendliness and community engagement efforts. Founded in 1908, UNO has served learners of all backgrounds for more than 100 years and is dedicated to another century of excellence both in the classroom and in the community.

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