NEW INSTITUTE TO RESEARCH CONNECTION OF MIND, BODY

COLUMBUS -- The Institute for Behavioral Medicine
Research at The Ohio State University will enhance research
in psychoneuroimmunology -- a new field of medicine that
investigates the connection between mind and body.

The University Board of Trustees on Friday (2/2)
approved a proposal from a group of pioneering researchers
from four colleges at Ohio State to establish the institute.

In 1982, seven faculty joined to study how behavior
influences interaction of the central nervous system, the
immune system and endocrine system, said Ronald Glaser,
professor of medical microbiology and immunology. Glaser,
who holds the Gilbert and Kathryn Mitchell Chair in the
College of Medicine, will serve as the institute’s first
director.

Today, the 12 members of the group have expertise in
immunology, virology, psychiatry, psychology, endocrinology,
molecular biology, behavior, heart reactivity, oncology and
neuroscience.

The research group is one of the largest in the world

-- more --
to study the relationship of stress and disease using human subjects. Faculty are looking at topics related to preventive medicine, such as how the stress of caring for Alzheimer's disease patients affects the health of caregivers.

Eventually, the institute will have 20 faculty members who, in addition to conducting research, will work with graduate students from several disciplines and post-doctoral fellows.

The group already is successful in obtaining research grant support, with an annual budget of $4.5 million. Included are National Institutes of Health grants such as a $2 million, 10-year Merit Award and a four-year, $4 million program project grant.

The formation of an institute helps the group compete for increasingly scarce government funds, and opens the door to establishing an endowment with private donations and grants from private foundations, Glaser said.

The institute will benefit the entire university, Glaser noted. For instance, faculty already have received attention from newspapers, magazines, television networks and radio stations nationwide. Also, several members of the group have been appointed to prestigious professional committees and organizations.

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Written by Gemma McLuckie.
Researchers to study stress, disease link

Institute will study effects on various body systems

By Michelle May
Lantern staff writer

Ohio State's Board of Trustees has given a group of OSU researchers permission to form an institute to study the link between stress and disease in the human body.

The researchers say the institute could attract millions of dollars in research grants to OSU.

The Institute for Behavioral Medicine Research is one of the first of its kind in the world to conduct studies on the effects of stress on the immune, endocrine and cardiovascular systems, said Dr. William Malarkey, professor of medicine. By studying the connection, the group hopes to prevent disease or limit its effect on people, he said.

Malarkey is a member of the institute's executive committee and one of 12 researchers from four colleges conducting studies in the area. Faculty and students from the colleges of medicine, dentistry, biological sciences and social and behavioral sciences will participate in institute studies.

The trustees voted to recognize the group as an institute Feb. 2. OSU has not committed any funding.

"Now that we've been officially recognized by OSU, what we have to do now is raise at least $25 million more from outside the university to make sure this institute is a reality," said Ronald Glaser, the institute's director and a professor of microbiology and immunology. "Now, it's just an institute on paper."

The institute has already secured $20 million in research grants primarily from the National Institutes of Health, Glaser said. Financial support has also come from the National Science Foundation and American Cancer Society.

By establishing the research group as an institute, they hope to gain greater recognition and more funding, he said.

"It also benefits the university by attracting high-quality faculty, graduate students and post-doctorate fellows to the university to participate in the research," Glaser said.

OSU has been conducting research on stress and disease for almost a decade. The research group is considered one of the largest in the world, he said.

"In the early 1980s when we started this research, very few people believed that the immune system could be modified by the central nervous system or the brain," Glaser said. "Today, there are very few people who still believe that."

Research findings from the institute could have implications in efforts to prevent and fight diseases such as cancer and AIDS, Malarkey said. Faculty are also looking into topics such as how the stress of caring for Alzheimer's disease patients affects the health of care givers, he said.