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e-mail: peter.kent@clemsonnews.clemson.edu***** EMBARGOED FOR AIRING/PUBLICATION ON JUNE 1, 2006*****

CLEMSON RECEIVES \$2 MILLION FROM HHMI FOR UNDERGRADUATE SCIENCE EDUCATION

CLEMSON — The Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the nation's largest private supporter of science education, has awarded Clemson University \$2 million to strengthen and enrich undergraduate science teaching in South Carolina. Clemson is one of 50 programs in 28 states selected from 158 applicants competing for \$86.4 million to support bold and innovative science education programs at research universities across the country.

With this new award, Clemson has received \$5.2 million from HHMI since 1998, according to Barbara Speziale, the principal investigator of the grant. The grant resides in the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences, mainly in the biological sciences department, with other departments participating, she said.

"I am grateful to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute for its continued support of our programs," said Speziale. "The biological sciences are going through a tremendous period of change -- some people are calling this the 'Biological Century' -- and we must make sure our teachers and students are prepared."

The grant will fund an array of initiatives, including:

- Laboratory Research Opportunities: providing summer and school-year research experiences for undergraduate students and, with the S.C. Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, for advanced high school students.
- Teacher Enhancement: To expand graduate courses for in-service teachers, adding bioengineering, bioinformatics, biotechnology, computer technology and forensics.
- Online Database of South Carolina Assets for Teachers: To develop an online database for assets (videos, photos, text) collected by teachers and students. The database will allow searches by keywords and allow assets to be copied for classroom activities.
- Clemson University Science Outreach Laboratory Field Trips for Middle and

High School Students: To support laboratory field trips that will provide hands-on exercises in biotechnology, genetics, forensics and natural history. The lessons cover life sciences from molecules and cells to whole organisms.

- **Minority Participation in the Biology Merit Exam (BME):** To support students from middle and high schools with large minority populations to participate in the BME, a one-day event that recognizes biology talent and informs students and teachers of requisite biology knowledge.

“Our current Hughes project established a link between our successful program to involve exemplary high school students in research and the undergraduate college experience at Clemson University and South Carolina historically black colleges and universities -- Benedict College, Claflin University and Morris College,” said Speziale. “We will increase interactions and communications between the schools by instituting a midyear visit of HBCU faculty and students to Clemson University research laboratories. These visits will give students from the undergraduate-only colleges insight into and contacts at Clemson University, where they may potentially pursue graduate studies. This supports the Clemson goal to increase minority enrollments at all levels.”

HHMI has supported undergraduate science education at the nation’s colleges and universities since 1988. Through its undergraduate grants, the institute has provided 247 institutions of higher learning with nearly \$700 million for programs that include undergraduate research opportunities; new faculty, courses, and labs; teaching and mentoring training; and work with pre-college students and teachers.

“We believe it is vital to bring fresh perspectives to the teaching of established scientific disciplines and to develop novel courses in emerging areas, such as computational biology, genomics and bio-imaging, said Thomas R. Cech, HHMI president. “Our grantee universities are providing hands-on research experiences to help prepare undergraduates, including women and minorities underrepresented in the sciences.”

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