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LOS ANGELES TIMES

OPINION

Published March 8, 2005

ON CAMPUS AT UCI

At the helm of stem cell study

By Susan Menning

The passage of Proposition 71 gives \$3 billion in bonds over a 10-year period to fund stem cell research and facilities in the state.

Sue Bryant, dean of biological sciences at UC Irvine and a leading researcher in limb regeneration, is one of 29 members of the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee that governs the stem cell research institute approved by voters in the Nov. 2 election.

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The commission also will establish best practices for the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine, a virtual research institute charged with the allocation of stem cell research funding.

"For the first time in the history of the world, cells that are many times smaller than the period at the end of this sentence have assumed a commanding role in science, health, politics and ethics, as well as state and national legislation," Bryant said.

"It is exciting to be in a position to fund research that holds tremendous promise for people with debilitating diseases. This initiative is not promising instant cures, but it is promising an instant research focus on the capabilities of stem cells. Treatments

for intolerable diseases are closer to reality as more stem cell research takes place."

At UCI, active stem cell research programs are ongoing in several areas -- the Institute for Brain Aging and Dementia, the Center for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory, the Cancer Research Institute and the Center for Immunology, to name just a few. Our renowned faculty in the neurosciences, chemistry and pharmacology are poised to explore the use of human embryonic stem cells as therapeutic agents for both neurological and psychiatric disorders.

And UCI is developing a spinal cord clinical trial with human embryonic stem cells that is anticipated to be the first such trial performed in North America.

"The support by Californians of Prop. 71 will have a huge impact -- the availability of funding will increase the amount of stem cell research being conducted and accelerate its progress as well," Bryant said. "The future of medicine is in regenerative medicine -- in assisting our bodies to heal themselves. The study of stem cells is the first step along this road."

Dean Bryant presents "Regeneration, Rejuvenation, Stem Cells" at 5:30 p.m. on March 17 in UCI's Langson Library, as part of the UCI Libraries Speaker Series.

The event is free and community members are encouraged to attend. Reservations are required; call (949) 824-5300.

SPEAKERS TO ADDRESS

MEMORY, MORALITY

James McGaugh, founding director of UCI's Center for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory, speaks on "Significance and Remembrance: How Our Brains Make Lasting Memories" at a lunchtime forum Wednesday.

The center's research focuses on one of most challenging quests of modern science: What are the complex processes that underlie our ability to learn and remember?

On March 16, Kristen Monroe, professor of political science, presents "The Hand of Compassion: A Discussion of Moral Choice During the Holocaust."

Monroe is director of the UCI Interdisciplinary Center for the Scientific Study of Ethics and Morality, which explores the question: What causes moral behavior?

Scholars at the interdisciplinary center study a wide range of topics, including altruism, cooperation and moral psychology; bioethics and the biochemistry of friendship and community; religion and international security; and genes, personality and moral responsibility.

Both events take place at 11:30 a.m. at the University Club. For reservations, call (949) 824-7960.

BEALL CENTER PRESENTS

'MUSIC BOT,' FAMILY DAY

Jazz pianist Kei Akagi provides a demonstration of real-time musical interaction between man and machines -- a collection of robotic musical instruments designed by the League of Electronic Musical Urban Robots.

The music is composed -- and the musically intelligent robots programmed -- by music professor Christopher Dobrian. The free, public event takes place at 6 p.m. on March 18 at the Beall Center for Art and Technology. Seating is limited; for

reservations, call (949) 824-4339.

The Beall Center also presents "Family Day" from 2 to 4 p.m. on March 19. Families with children 7 to 18 are invited to join League of Electronic Musical Urban Robots for a day of art workshops, artist talks, film screenings and special events. Visit <http://beallcenter.uci.edu> for more.

Please stay in touch, and let us know how we can help you become better connected with the top-ranked research university right here in your backyard.

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