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Stem-cell center's vision

By **GARY ROBBINS AND LUIS BRAVO**

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UC Irvine is proposing to build one of the nation's largest embryonic stem-cell institutes, a \$60 million center where more than 1 billion stem cells per year would be produced for scientists studying such neurodegenerative disorders as Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and spinal-cord injuries.

The campus is hustling to take advantage of the tens of millions of dollars that Proposition 71 will make available to build such centers. UCI officials say the voter-approved initiative could cover about \$48 million of the center's estimated cost, with the rest coming from private donations.

"We're confident that we could raise the private money," said Mike Gottfredson, UCI's executive vice chancellor. "And this is an ideal location for it because the campus is located so close to John Wayne Airport. Visiting scientists could fly here from anywhere in the state within two hours."

UCI said the center would produce stem cells by duplicating cells from existing batches, or "lines," and through the technique known as therapeutic cloning. None of the embryos used to generate such cells would be used for human reproduction.

Researchers plan to begin ramping up stem-cell production late this summer in a temporary location in UCI's University Research Park. By the end of the year, as many as a dozen UCI scientists could be working with the cells.