

## **New \$27.5 Million Tulane University Biosafety Lab Will Expand Research, Create Jobs**

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Tulane University staff and public officials celebrated the dedication of the Tulane National Primate Research Center's \$27.5 million Regional Biosafety Laboratory today. The state-of-the-art research lab is built to strict national safety standards to study emerging infectious diseases and potential agents of bioterrorism. The new 38,800 square foot building increases the center's highest-level biosafety lab space by sevenfold, greatly expanding Tulane researchers' ability to develop cutting-edge treatments, vaccines and diagnostic tests for infectious agents and toxins.

The Regional Biosafety Lab coupled with the completion of a \$9.5 million animal research facility will create approximately 60 new jobs with \$2.2 million in annual payroll, creating an expected \$42 million economic impact on the region during the next five years, according to Andrew Lackner, director of the Tulane National Primate Research Center.

"The recent construction of a number of new research facilities, and the Regional Biosafety Laboratory in particular, provide tremendous opportunities to expand our world-class research programs in infectious diseases," Lackner said. "These research programs will help in developing new vaccines, diagnostics and treatment for infectious diseases, and also generate a significant number of new jobs in Louisiana."

The Regional Biosafety Lab is one of only 13 National Institutes of Health (NIH) supported Regional Biosafety Level 3 laboratories in the country, and the only one affiliated with a national primate research center, medical school and school of public health and tropical medicine. Biosafety Level 3 is a national designation for labs designed and managed with numerous safeguards to assure containment for the study of airborne bacteria, viruses and toxins.

Tulane used a \$21 million grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) to help pay for the lab, which will collaborate on NIH projects related to biodefense and emerging infectious diseases. The infectious diseases program at the Tulane National Primate Research Center focuses on HIV/AIDS, malaria, Lyme disease, West Nile virus, tuberculosis, microsporidiosis and other diseases. These are multidisciplinary studies involving investigators in multiple divisions at the primate center and collaborators from elsewhere at Tulane and other institutions.

Located on about 500 acres of land 35 miles north of New Orleans in Covington, the primate center employs about 280 people, including 35 doctoral-level scientists, and houses about 5,000 nonhuman primates. For more information about the primate center, please visit <http://www.tnprc.tulane.edu>.