

Funding Supports Cancer Genetics Researchers

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A program that helps Tulane University attract and retain promising research scientists in cancer genetics is getting an \$11.1 million boost in federal funding.



Celebrating the new funding in cancer genetics, Prescott Deininger, left, Tulane Cancer Center director, introduces five junior faculty members whose work the grants support. Beside Deininger from left are Victoria Belancio, Dr. Ilana Fortgang, Dr. Zongbing You, Nick Makridakis and Dr. Tomoo Iwakuma. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The National Institutes of Health has awarded Tulane a five-year, \$10.5 million Center of Biomedical Research Excellence grant to continue a career-development program affiliated with the Tulane Cancer Center and the [Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium](#).

The grant funds research projects for five junior faculty members and matches these investigators with a team of senior scientists in cancer genetics who act as mentors, guiding research progress as well as career development.

Tulane also has been awarded a two-year, \$600,000 supplemental grant from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to add a sixth junior faculty member and four mentors to the program.

The program's goal is to grow the pool of research scientists in cancer genetics in New Orleans by helping junior faculty get to the point where they can obtain their own major funding from the National Institutes of Health and other national programs, says Prescott Deininger, [Tulane Cancer Center](#) director.



Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu, a key supporter behind the new funding, speaks at Monday's press conference.

The program, which features mentors and mentees from Tulane and Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, emphasizes lab-based research that can translate to clinical applications in cancer treatment. The grant includes funds to support senior faculty mentors and pay salaries for up to 20 skilled investigators or fellows.

The current mentees from Tulane include: Victoria Belancio, assistant professor of structural and cellular biology; Dr. Ilana Fortgang, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics and head of the section of pediatric gastroenterology; Nick Makridakis, assistant professor of epidemiology; Dr. Zongbing You, assistant professor of structural and cellular biology; and Dr. Bridgette Collins-Burow, assistant professor of medicine, section of hematology and medical oncology. Dr. Tomoo Iwakuma, assistant professor of genetics at LSU Health Sciences Center, also is a mentee.