

The President's Report

Issue 20 February 2011

Never Skipping a Beat

University receives \$9.6 million grant to study heart attacks

Roberto Bolli, M.D., director of the Institute of Molecular Cardiology, chief of cardiovascular medicine at UofL, and Bucks for Brains faculty is the principal investigator who will lead an effort to develop cardioprotective therapies at the pre-clinical level. The University of Louisville will lead a network of researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Emory University in Atlanta and Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.

The researchers will perform blinded, randomized animal studies to examine how to lessen the damage done to heart muscle in a heart attack.

For almost 40 years, the NIH/NHLBI has invested considerable resources in preclinical studies aimed at developing muscle sparing therapies. Throughout this time, hundreds of therapies have been developed that have been claimed to limit infarct size in preclinical models. However, Bolli said, none have advanced to the clinical stage. For Bolli, history is about to change. "We hope that by doing this we will be able to find a drug that really works – that is really reproducibly effective in experimental models. Once we find a drug, the next step will be to take it to a clinical trial, and the likelihood that the drug will work in patients will be much higher because it is truly effective at the experimental level."

In Good Company – UofL is partnering with:



"Dr. Bolli will work with a network of investigators toward finding a new therapy for cardioprotection – that is a different approach – that is ushering an era of big science, science that will hopefully bring discoveries to the clinical arena faster – UofL is at the center, leading the way to this new approach."

– Dr. Jesse Roman, Chair of the Dept. of Medicine

"We are going to be the national standard for cardioprotective health in the country – it is truly a transformative event, a paradigm shift. This is what is needed to move the field forward."

– Dr. Roberto Bolli, Principal Investigator

Bucks For Brains: Attracting Big Brains Costs Big Money

The University of Louisville has maximized the Bucks for Brains program – matching \$115 million from the state to hire top-flight researchers like Dr. Roberto Bolli and others.

Today, UofL has 104 Bucks for Brains positions (of those, 67 are filled). Unfortunately, some are currently vacant due to lack of funding. In many cases the state dollars PLUS UofL matching funds only provides enough cash to hire one high-powered researcher. It doesn't provide enough money for that researcher to bring his/her "team" to UofL, which is a routine part of the recruitment process.

But the biggest return Kentuckians are seeing from the Bucks for Brains program is the groundbreaking research that is changing lives. In addition to Dr. Bolli's work, there are others, including:



Dr. Henry Kaplan is working on more effective treatments for several blinding eye diseases including age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.



Dr. Susan Harkema's team is proving that people with spinal cord injuries can walk as the nervous system is retrained to work again.



Dr. Don Miller is building the Brown Cancer Center into a nationally recognized center for the treatment and prevention of cancer.

A Letter from the President

Dear Friend,

At a recent press conference I called Dr. Roberto Bolli a "rock star." Indeed Dr. Bolli is renowned in the area of heart research. And, he's at the University of Louisville!

Dr. Bolli recently received a first-of-its-kind \$9.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. Bolli will lead a team of researchers from four universities (University of Louisville, Johns Hopkins University, Emory University, Virginia Commonwealth University) in pre-clinical trials on cardioprotective therapies, trying to find new ways to protect the heart from heart attacks. Again, Bolli is doing this internationally watched research at the University of Louisville. And we know that neither Roberto nor many of the other top-flight researchers and endowed chairs at UofL would be here without the Bucks for Brains program.



Bucks for Brains has been transformational for the research efforts at UofL. We managed to keep Dr. Bolli at UofL and assemble a team around him using Bucks for Brains dollars. The University of Louisville has also used the dollars to lure other researchers to Kentucky. Among them - Susie Harkema is proving that people with spinal cord injuries can walk again; Henry Kaplan is working on more effective treatments for several blinding eye diseases; and Don Miller saves lives and conducts research to find answers to cancer.

To recruit these "rock stars" we must have their "back-up bands," or team of talented faculty and staff that accompany them. It is this gap in funding for which it is often difficult to find resources. If it weren't for the \$115 million the state legislature has appropriated, and that UofL has matched since 1998, we would not have advanced the science to change lives, let alone save them. Our rock stars are also bringing millions of dollars in federal research money to UofL, boosting the local economy and helping provide jobs for 300 people tied to the Bucks for Brains program.

We still have work to do in securing the money to fill the open chairs in the Bucks for Brains program while ensuring the ongoing funding of the 67 Bucks for Brains chairs who are currently doing wonders at UofL. We will get there. We are committed to the Bucks for Brains program and we know Kentucky lawmakers are as well. It's a program that's making a difference in the lives of everyday Kentuckians and ensuring the future of groundbreaking research efforts at UofL.



UofL Dentistry Provides Free Dental Care to Kentucky Children

Thirty elementary schools in Bullitt, Jefferson, Henry, Meade, Oldham and Trimble Counties participate

Smile Kentucky! will provide care for more than 240 Kentucky children whose dental needs were discovered during free screenings at their schools. Many of the children have never visited a dentist; others have problems that have gone untreated for months. Smile Kentucky! will provide over \$100,000 in free dental services, including cleanings, fillings and sealants. Now in its ninth year, Smile Kentucky! provides dental education, free dental screenings and treatment to children in Louisville Metro and surrounding counties.

Vice President Biden visits UofL

"We are not passengers of history, but we are drivers of history." – Vice President Joe Biden



Biden came to the university's McConnell Center and then met individually with the McConnell Scholars.



UofL Professor Flees Egypt

A University of Louisville researcher who was in Egypt when trouble erupted has arrived back in Louisville after a five-day ordeal to get home.

Steven Myers, professor of pharmacology and toxicology, was in Cairo doing field work for his research on environmental pollutants and cancer. Myers had to cut his trip short after the uprising began. Professor Steven Myers says the journey to get out of Cairo was one he will never forget. "When you drive along the highway and you see these tanks with men with the machine guns and they're cocked and loaded, you start thinking what am I doing here?"



The vice president opened his remarks by joking with the audience: "You want to see if a Republican and a Democrat really like one another. They do. They really do," he said.



UNIVERSITY OF
LOUISVILLE.
It's Happening Here.



The University of Louisville is an equal opportunity institution. The delivery of this publication is carbon neutral. It is printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper. It was produced by the University of Louisville and printed using nonstate funds. 200993-02/11