

RESEARCH

The world of biomedicine is filled with scientific analysis, calibration and an atmosphere of precision and organization. Yet, even in this environment, it never hurts to have – as bridge and poker players might say – a “trump card” or an “ace in the hole.”

UNMC’s share of Nebraska’s Tobacco Settlement Biomedical Research Development Fund has time and again been a not-so-secret weapon used to develop research initiatives and faculty recruiting.

NOT all up in SMOKE

by Walter Brooks

Nebraska was among a group of 46 states that agreed to a \$246 billion settlement with the tobacco industry in 1998. The settlement was a result of the states’ efforts to recoup money spent to care for ill smokers. Nebraska’s share of the settlement is about \$1.2 billion over a 25-year period.

“Nebraskans are fortunate that our state is one of only four in the nation that chose to invest all of its Tobacco Settlement money into health care needs – starting with its inaugural annual payment of \$50 million,” said Tom Rosenquist, Ph.D., UNMC vice chancellor for research.

“UNMC is fortunate that \$10 million of that first allotment was earmarked for biomedical research at UNMC, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Creighton University and Boys Town National Research Hospital,” he said. That amount

increased to \$12 million in 2006, and lawmakers may consider increasing that amount to \$14 million annually, as originally intended when the fund was created.

“As a result, we have been able to count on a critical financial resource exclusively set aside to support developing state-of-the-art infrastructure for National Institutes of Health-funded scientists, recruiting and retaining NIH-funded scientists, and developing pilot research projects that lead to NIH funding. The money continues to be an excellent investment,” Dr. Rosenquist said.

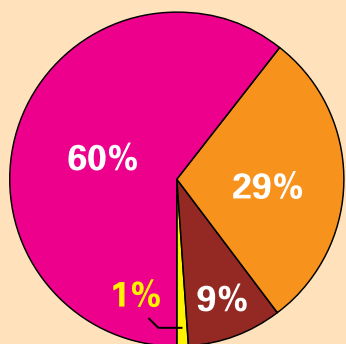
The year 2006-07 will be the sixth year of Tobacco Settlement Funding. UNMC will receive \$5.7 million in 2006-07 for a total cumulative funding in six years of \$30.4 million. The four partners have received a combined total

of \$64 million to date.

Tobacco Settlement Funds have helped UNMC make a number of all-star faculty recruitments, including a nationally acclaimed husband/wife clinical research team.

In December 2005, the Munroe-Meyer Institute appointed Wayne Fisher, Ph.D., to director of the MMI Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Hattie B. Munroe Professor of Behavioral Research; and his wife, Cathleen Piazza, Ph.D., to professor in the department of pediatrics. They came to UNMC as a team from the faculty at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Together, they soon will begin clinical services and research at MMI’s new Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders and the Pediatric Feeding Disorders Program.

“A great deal of support went into recruiting Drs. Fisher and Piazza,” said J. Michael Leibowitz, Ph.D., associate director of the MMI. “Tobacco Settlement Funds made up part of the recruitment package to be used for start-up costs, technicians and equipment.”



How UNMC has used \$19.3 million in tobacco settlement funds (Fiscal years 2001-05)

- 60% Strategic Recruitment/Retention
- 29% Research Infrastructure
- 9% Minority Health
- 1% Intercampus (UNMC/UNL)