

St. Louis nanotech institute formed

St. Louis Business Journal

Four St. Louis-area educational institutions are among the founding members of a new regional collaboration to use advances in nanotechnology to treat human diseases.

The new **St. Louis Institute of Nanomedicine Working Group** received \$1.5 million for three years from the **Missouri Life Sciences Research Fund**, part of the 1998 state tobacco settlement. The grant, issued in December, will fund about four pilot projects each year that will conduct research and train undergraduate and graduate students in the field, according to a release from Washington U.

The institute will promote joint research projects and permit sharing of equipment and other resources among its founding members, which include **Washington University in St. Louis**, the **University of Missouri-St. Louis**, **Saint Louis University** and **St. Louis Community College**.

Nanotechnology refers to materials, structures and devices that are smaller than 100 nanometers: Thousands can fit within the dot above the letter "i."

The institute's focus areas are: developing and evaluating new nanotechnologies for health care; facilitating commercialization and testing in patients; and work force and public education.

"It will be an inclusive, open network that will cultivate research and improve the ability to translate scientific discoveries into practical applications," said Dr. Samuel Wickline, in a statement. Wickline, who heads the **Siteman Center of Cancer Nanotechnology Excellence** at Washington University, leads the new institute's efforts at Washington U., along with co-principal investigator Dong Qin, associate dean for research in Washington U.'s Department of Energy, Environment and Chemical Engineering.

Representatives of the other founding institutions are Jingyue Liu, professor of physics and chemistry and director of the Center for Nanoscience at the University of Missouri-St. Louis; Dr. Maulik Shah, assistant professor of pediatrics in the Division of Medical Genetics at Saint Louis University Cancer Center; and Richard Norris, director of Plant and Life Sciences at St. Louis Community College.

The new institute will look for nanotechnology applications for early disease detection through enhanced imaging and drug delivery to targeted locations. It will also sponsor projects to evaluate the safety of medical use of nanotechnology.

The state Life Sciences Research Trust Fund, established in 2003 by the Missouri Legislature, puts 25 percent of the state's tobacco settlement proceeds into life sciences research. The Life Sciences Research Board awarded \$13.1 million in grants in December.

The St. Louis Institute of Nanomedicine Working Group plans to seek additional funding for regional nanotechnology research and training.