



The University of Texas at San Antonio
Office of University Communications
One UTSA Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78249-0619
(210) 458-4550
www.utsa.edu/today

Released: July 31, 2009

Contact: Christi Fish; Office: (210) 458-7584; Mobile: (210) 410-1305; christi.fish@utsa.edu

UTSA Biologists Win \$940,000 in Stimulus Funds to Advance Research

Two studies will focus on food safety and disease prevention

San Antonio ... [Robert Renthal](#), professor of biochemistry in the College of Sciences' [Department of Biology](#) at [The University of Texas at San Antonio](#) and [José Lopez-Ribot](#), professor of microbiology in UTSA's Department of Biology and a member of the university's [South Texas Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases](#), have received a combined \$940,000 in stimulus funding from the National Institutes of Health to further their research over the next two years.

Renthal, an expert in insect sensory perception, received UTSA's first stimulus funding award – \$390,000 to study the purpose and function of four different parts of an insect pheromone receptor's structure. Pheromone receptors detect the chemical communication signals insects use to attract a mate, signal danger or identify a food trail. Renthal expects his research to give scientists a better understanding of how to use pheromones to attract beneficial insects or repel harmful insects to protect the nation's food supply and to control insect-borne diseases.

Renthal has served on UTSA's faculty since 1975 and credits the South Texas Technology Management (STTM) Proof of Concept: Roadrunner (POCrr) grant he received in April 2008 with helping him to obtain stimulus funding. The \$25,000 STTM grant funded Renthal's background studies on the insect pheromone receptor, giving him preliminary data to include in his proposal to the NIH. Learn more about STTM's Proof of Concept program [here](#).

Lopez-Ribot, a medical mycologist specializing in the fungus *Candida albicans*, has been awarded a \$550,000 grant to study biofilms formed by the fungus, which causes infections called candidiasis. Candidiasis can be life-threatening in immunosuppressed patients and is the third most frequent infection in hospitals both in the United States and abroad. Biofilms are microbial communities attached to surfaces and help an infection progress by providing microorganisms a safe place from which they can invade tissue, start new infection sites and resist treatment efforts. These surfaces can include medical equipment, such as catheters and other types of implanted biomaterials.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 is an economic recovery package adopted to help states stabilize budgets and stimulate economic growth. Stimulus funding will be allocated, in part, to modernize health care, improve schools, modernize infrastructure and invest in the clean energy technologies of the future.

#

About the University of Texas at San Antonio

The University of Texas at San Antonio is one of the fastest growing higher education institutions in Texas and the second largest of nine academic universities and six health institutions in the UT System. As a multicultural research and teaching institution of access and excellence, UTSA aims to be the Next Great Texas University, providing access to educational excellence and preparing citizen leaders for the global environment.

UTSA serves more than 28,400 students in 64 bachelor's, 47 master's and 21 doctoral degree programs in the colleges of Architecture, Business, Education and Human Development, Engineering, Honors, Liberal and Fine Arts, Public Policy, Sciences and Graduate School. Founded in 1969, UTSA is an intellectual and creative resource center and a socioeconomic development catalyst for Texas and beyond.

#