

UTSA Researcher Leverages Proof of Concept Grant to Win NIH Award

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SAN ANTONIO (June 24, 2009) — UTSA biology professor Robert R. Renthal was recently awarded a \$390,000 NIH grant to study insect olfactory receptor proteins. In particular, the two-year study will investigate how four different parts of an insect pheromone receptor fit together into an active structure. Pheromones, airborne chemical signals that insects use to communicate with members of the same species, are used to signal an alarm, identify mates, or mark a food trail. Knowing this information will make it easier to specifically attract or repel insects.

Renthal credits the South Texas Technology Management (STTM) Proof of Concept: Roadrunner (*POCrr*) grant he received in April 2008 with helping him obtain the award. “Our background studies that were funded by STTM helped convince NIH that we could do a new type of experiment. We’ve also submitted a proposal to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and we have several more in the planning stages. Pheromones will be an essential tool in combating insects that carry diseases and damage crops. It is important because there is now an increased danger of invasive species, caused by economic globalization and climate change,” said Renthal.

POCrr, available to UTSA faculty, provides awards of up to \$25,000 and is intended to help bridge the gap between promising inventions and market-ready innovations. As development proceeds, STTM case managers work closely with the award recipients to advance prospects for licensing to commercial partners. *POCrr* is funded through a supplement to a Texas Emerging Technology Fund award that established the UTSA Institute for Cyber Security.

“Although the grants are intended to accelerate commercialization, *POCrr* grants have proven to be a catalyst for attracting follow-on external grant funding. By demonstrating feasibility of a concept or creating a working model, inventors have been able to apply for and receive additional funds to advance development of UT technology,” says Claude C. Longoria, M.B.A., STTM licensing associate and manager of the Proof of Concept Grant Program.

For a complete list of award recipients and for information about the program, selection criteria, and application requirements, please visit www.utsttm.org or contact Claude Longoria at longoriacc@uthscsa.edu or 210-567-2147.

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South Texas Technology Management is the regional technology transfer office serving the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, UT San Antonio, UT Brownsville and UT Pan American. STTM provides comprehensive intellectual property services for technologies developed by faculty, staff and students. STTM is dedicated to the protection and licensing of these technologies in order to further research and development, protect the interests of the faculty and the University, enhance economic development and provide humanitarian value to the community. By facilitating the development and commercialization of UT inventions, STTM is fostering and encouraging the creation of new and cutting-edge technologies.