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UT Southwestern scientist named by Keck Foundation as Distinguished Young Scholar in Medical Research

DALLAS – July 25, 2006 – Dr. Russell DeBose-Boyd, assistant professor of molecular genetics at UT Southwestern Medical Center, has been named a Distinguished Young Scholar in Medical Research by the Los Angeles-based W.M. Keck Foundation.

The award of up to \$1 million over five years will support the researcher's work on the enzymes that regulate and control cholesterol production, studies that may shed light on the prevention and treatment of heart disease.

"I'm honored to be included among such a distinguished group of young investigators," said Dr. DeBose-Boyd, one of five Keck Young Scholar winners nationwide this year. "This generous award will allow my lab to continue our efforts to understand the enzyme HMG CoA reductase, a key player in cholesterol synthesis and the target of cholesterol-lowering statin drugs.

"I'm grateful to the W.M. Keck Foundation for this support that allows young researchers to explore novel projects and take on new challenges in high-risk areas that could lead to important medical breakthroughs," he said.

A native of Boswell, Okla., Dr. DeBose-Boyd received his bachelor's degree in chemistry from Southeastern Oklahoma State University and his doctorate in biochemistry and molecular biology from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. Before joining the faculty of UT Southwestern as an instructor in 2001, he was a postdoctoral fellow in the molecular genetics laboratory of two of UT Southwestern's four Nobel laureates, Dr. Michael Brown and Dr. Joseph Goldstein. As a young faculty member at UT Southwestern Dr. DeBose-Boyd's early research was supported by the Perot Foundation.

Dr. DeBose-Boyd said being named a Keck Young Scholar is a reflection of the scientific environment in the Department of Molecular Genetics and at UT Southwestern in general.

"This institution encourages young scientists, and provides tremendously talented mentors. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for the leadership of Dr. Brown and Dr. Goldstein," he said.

Drs. Brown and Goldstein received the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine in 1985 for their discovery of the underlying mechanisms of cholesterol metabolism.

"Over the last 33 years, Mike Brown and I have been very fortunate in having had many

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superb postdoctoral fellows work with us,” said Dr. Goldstein, chairman of molecular genetics. “Russell ranks among the very top in terms of his intelligence, creativity, judgment and technical prowess. He is following in the footsteps of other outstanding former fellows, such as Drs. David Russell [professor of molecular genetics], Thomas Südhof [director of the Center for Basic Neuroscience], Helen Hobbs [director of the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development and the Donald W. Reynolds Cardiovascular Research Center], Mark Lehrman [professor of pharmacology], Joachim Herz [professor of molecular genetics], Xiaodong Wang [professor of biochemistry] and Jay Horton [associate professor of internal medicine and molecular genetics], all of whom have remained at UT Southwestern where their independent careers have flourished.”

Dr. Brown, director of the Erik Jonsson Center for Research in Molecular Genetics and Human Disease, added: “Dr. DeBose-Boyd has added a whole new chapter to our knowledge of the regulation of HMG CoA reductase. He has shown in detail how the enzyme is targeted for rapid degradation when certain sterols build up in cells, thereby stopping cholesterol synthesis. His work is conceptually brilliant, technically courageous and medically relevant. His selection as a Keck Scholar is eminently justified.”

The W.M. Keck Foundation established the Distinguished Young Scholars in Medical Research Program in 1998 to support groundbreaking research addressing the fundamental mechanisms of human disease. Under the program, each grant recipient’s home institution receives an award of up to \$1 million to support the scientist’s research activities for five years. Nominations from institutions are accepted on an invitation-only basis.

Dr. Hongtao Yu, associate professor of pharmacology at UT Southwestern, was named a Keck Young Scholar in 2003.

Other 2006 winners are: Dr. Luis Amaral of Northwestern University, Dr. Seth Blackshaw of Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Jonathan Bogan of Yale University School of Medicine and Dr. Amy Pasquinelli of the University of California, San Diego.

The W.M. Keck Foundation was established in 1954 by the late Mr. Keck, founder of Superior Oil Co.

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