



## Louisiana Board of Regents Press Release



### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Louisiana awarded \$3.25 Million for Science and Engineering Collaborative Consortia**

**Baton Rouge, LA** – Louisiana is one of six states to receive \$3.25 million from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR). A total of nearly \$18 million will be awarded to three regional partnerships that will collaborate on science and engineering research, education, and outreach to accelerate progress on scientific grand challenges, strengthen workforce capabilities, and broaden the participation of underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Those states include Nebraska-Kansas, Arkansas-Missouri, and Louisiana-Mississippi. Collectively, these awards span six states, and involve researchers from about twenty universities over a three year period. "These consortia will spur technological innovations that drive economic growth and develop a diverse STEM-enabled workforce," said Denise Barnes, Head of NSF's EPSCoR program.

Under the leadership of Dr. Michael Khonsari (LSU), Principal Investigator, and Dr. John Hamilton (MSU), Co-Principal Investigator, Louisiana and Mississippi will be working collaboratively to develop new experimental and computational tools for smart polymeric materials that have applications in medicine and materials science. "The activities of this multi-jurisdictional consortium will create a pipeline of high-tech workers that translates state-of-the-art R&D into an engine that contributes to sustainable economic development in the region," said Dr. Michael Khonsari, LA-EPSCoR Project Director and Associate Commissioner for Sponsored Programs R&D.

The interdisciplinary research team will apply molecular modeling and cyber control strategies across the lifecycle of polymer development from bench-top synthesis to product manufacture. The Consortium will tailor the design of smart polymers to meet pressing needs in drug delivery, environmental remediation, and nanomaterials. Advances in the science of polymer characterization and materials synthesis will serve as a central theme for education and outreach activities that engage local schools, teachers, undergraduate and graduate students, and industry.

"We are pleased to be selected by NSF, and to partner with Mississippi for this exciting work," said Dr. Tom Layzell, Senior Advisor to the Board of Regents. "With the influx of business and industry in Louisiana, research and outreach programs which focus on STEM areas are critical. We anticipate the outcome."

By coordinating research with education and outreach, the Consortium will also work towards strengthening regional economic competitiveness through building a diverse STEM pipeline. "Computerized monitoring of materials development is especially exciting," said Dr. Sean Kennan, EPSCoR Program Officer. "This research has the potential to accelerate the transition from scientific discovery to applied manufacturing."