



## For Immediate Release

### For Information

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### HEALTH SCIENCES SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST ENDOWED CHAIR AWARD GOES TO BRAIN IMAGING CENTER

GREENVILLE, S.C., FEBRUARY 23, 2005 - - Health Sciences South Carolina today announced the award of its first endowed chair matching grant, committing \$5 million toward the establishment of the South Carolina Brain Imaging Center of Excellence. The Center will serve as the impetus for an industrial cluster in the lucrative multidisciplinary field of brain imaging, integrating the intellectual resources of the University of South Carolina (USC) and the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) with new physical resources so together the universities can compete internationally for funding, projects and people.

The award will help facilitate the purchase of a 3 Tesla Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanner, which will be located in a facility on the campus of Palmetto Health Richland. MUSC already has a 3T MRI scanner, used cooperatively by MUSC and USC scientists for research and patient care. Palmetto Health will use the high field strength MRI scanner for clinical research and patient care. Plans are to add a third 3T MRI scanner in the Upstate on the campus of Greenville Hospital System. The three high-field scanners will be electronically linked and integrated through the Brain Imaging Center.

Making the announcement were Health Sciences South Carolina founding partners USC President Andrew Sorensen, Palmetto Health Chief Executive Officer Kester Freeman, MUSC President Ray Greenberg and Greenville Hospital System President and Chief Executive Officer Frank Pinckney.

USC's Sorensen hailed the award as a "victory" for legislators and the people of South Carolina. "When the General Assembly agreed to make funding available to our

state's research universities through the South Carolina Research Centers of Economic Excellence Act, they created a 'window of opportunity' for transforming South Carolina's economy. Today, Health Sciences South Carolina has responded by committing \$5 million to advancing brain imaging clinical research and patient care. The Brain Imaging Center will allow USC and MUSC to accelerate the pace of research by leveraging USC's expertise in cognitive neuroscience, computer science, engineering and public health and MUSC's international reputation in brain imaging and new brain therapies, making South Carolina more competitive nationally and internationally," Sorensen said.

Echoing Sorensen's remarks, Palmetto Health's Freeman said, "The goal of the Collaborative is to achieve tangible benefits for our state as quickly as possible, recognizing that stimulating economic growth through health sciences research and education requires a long-term commitment. In the case of the Brain Imaging Center, South Carolinians will see an immediate return on investment. The fact that the Brain Imaging Center will be actively engaged in patient care in a state adversely affected by stroke, particularly among the African-American community, is very exciting."

Joining Health Sciences South Carolina partners in the announcement were the Brain Imaging Center's co-directors, Mark George, M.D., director, MUSC Center for Advanced Imaging Research, and Gordon C. Baylis, Ph.D., associate provost for academic initiatives, USC.

George says the Brain Imaging Center has the potential to impact economic development in several ways: attracting multi-million dollar grants and research partnerships, the sale of patents on technology developed by the Center, and job creation. The integrated statewide network of 3T MRI scanners located in Charleston, Columbia and Greenville will help South Carolina lure companies interested in conducting large-scale clinical trials.

"The fact that we can offer three of the most powerful MRI scanners in the world in three very different geographies is very attractive to companies that need to test new technologies or pharmaceuticals in a large, ethnically diverse population," Baylis said.

Baylis explained the Brain Imaging Center will target research projects that focus on neuro-degenerative disease like stroke, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease; serious health threats that are all too common in South Carolina. "Our state is at or near the top of the list in these diseases due to the age, poor diet, lack or

exercise and smoking. While it is a problem, South Carolina's poor health status also represents an opportunity for us to make significant improvements."

GHS President and Chief Executive Officer Frank Pinckney said, "In a state that is primarily rural in population, these three scanners connected to this research initiative will provide access to the entire population of South Carolina in advancing research that will directly impact economic development, creation of new jobs, and the 'transfer of knowledge' to physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals."

By working together, USC, MUSC, Palmetto Health and Greenville Hospital System can use brain imaging to address real challenges and have a direct affect on the health status of all South Carolinians," Baylis added.

#### **About Health Sciences South Carolina**

Established in April 2004 by the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), the University of South Carolina (USC), Greenville Hospital System and Palmetto Health, Health Sciences South Carolina—the "Collaborative"—was founded with the vision of improving the health and economic wellbeing of South Carolina through a coordinated effort to advance health sciences education and research. The Collaborative is an inclusive public-private partnership that seeks to bring together universities, health systems, and other partners committed to the vision of using health science education and research to drive economic growth and improve the health status of South Carolinians.