Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah
Press Release

for Immediate Release

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Huntsman Cancer Institute Renews Prestigious National Cancer Institute Designation

Only such designation in five-state Intermountain West

Salt Lake City, December 30, 2010—Officials at Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI) at the University of Utah announced that the National Cancer Institute (NCI) has renewed its prestigious designation as a Cancer Center. The NCI designation recognizes the outstanding cancer research conducted at HCI. HCI holds the only such designation in the five-state Intermountain West and is the only NCI-designated Cancer Center within 500 miles of Salt Lake City.

“I am tremendously proud of the physicians, scientists, and administrative staff at HCI that have made this renewal possible,” says Jon M. Huntsman, HCI’s founding benefactor. “This highly prestigious designation includes only the nation’s elite cancer institutions, those that demonstrate exceptional ability to conduct cancer research. As part of the renewal process, HCI was evaluated by a team of 30 national cancer experts during a competitive grant review and site visit. HCI received the strongest rating in its history and was ranked in the “High Impact” category.”

The NCI designation recognizes the pivotal role of research in the development of improvements in cancer detection, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention and is reserved only for Cancer Centers that achieve the highest standards of excellence in cancer research. HCI received the prestigious NCI designation following a rigorous scientific review and evaluation of performance and expertise in several essential elements including the quality and impact of the Center’s cancer research, the availability of state-of-the-art research and patient care facilities, experienced scientific leadership, and the level of collaboration and translation of science to innovative cancer care.

HCI’s research excellence has been made possible by generous support of the Huntsman family and the Huntsman Cancer Foundation which supports HCI’s research mission via philanthropic contributions. An outstanding ten-member External Advisory Board provides planning and evaluation direction to HCI, and includes such luminaries as Dr. Edward Benz, President of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.
of Harvard University and Nobel Laureate, Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn of the University of California at San Francisco.

“The highly laudatory review of HCI’s programs by thought leaders in cancer research affirms the innovation and impact of our cancer research efforts. NCI designation brings financial resources to support further development of our research infrastructure, ensuring that we have cutting edge technologies and expertise,” says Mary Beckerle, Ph.D., HCI’s executive director. “The national recognition of our accomplishments and potential for future excellence allows us to attract top faculty and additional grant support for cancer research.”

HCI currently has 135 faculty researchers and more than $60 million in extramural grants. Considered a world leader in the study of cancer genetics, HCI researchers have earned international recognition for their work to identify the gene mutations responsible for colon cancer, breast and ovarian cancer, melanoma, neurofibromatosis, and, most recently, hereditary paraganglioma. A strategic focus of HCI is to leverage genetic understanding of cancer to personalize cancer risk assessment, diagnosis, and treatment.

“I have had the privilege of visiting HCI on many occasions since it was established,” says Utah Senator Orrin Hatch. “The recent NCI review confirms HCI’s status as an elite cancer research center, its commitment to excellence, and the significant impact it has had in the cancer research field. The research performed there provides real hope and life-saving results for cancer patients and their families.”

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which is one of 11 agencies that compose the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The NCI, established under the National Cancer Institute Act of 1937, is the Federal Government’s principal agency for cancer research and training. One of the responsibilities Congress has delegated to the agency is to assess the incorporation of state-of-the-art cancer treatments into clinical practice.

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