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Contact: [Karen Henry](#), Life Span Institute, 785-864-0756

Intellectual disabilities research center wins \$7 million grant

LAWRENCE — The Kansas Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center has been awarded a five-year, \$7 million grant from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

The KIDDRC is one of only 15 nationally designated centers that seek to advance the diagnosis, prevention, treatment and amelioration of intellectual and developmental disabilities, and has been funded since 1966 by the National Institutes of Health.

The bicampus KIDDRC is directed by John Colombo, director of the Life Span Institute and professor of psychology at the University of Kansas main Lawrence campus, and co-directed by Peter Smith, director of the Institute for Neurological Disorders and professor of molecular and integrative physiology at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

"The KIDDRC is distinguished among developmental disabilities research centers in part because of our strengths in biobehavioral research," said Colombo.

Biobehavioral research is a multidisciplinary approach that seeks to solve human problems by studying the problem at both the behavioral and biological levels.

Among the notable achievements of scientists affiliated with KIDDRC in the last five years is the identification of a chromosome 6 mutation associated with delayed language acquisition and specific language impairment in children by Mabel Rice; a unique vocalization pattern in very young children diagnosed with autism, identified by Steven Warren; the discovery of a new genetic variant of Prader-Willi syndrome by Merlin Butler and Randy Nudo's work on a machine-brain interface that is providing opportunities for bridging damaged brain regions.

"The KIDDRC is an indispensable part of the research landscape on the Lawrence and KUMC campuses," said Smith. "It has played a major role in bringing cutting-edge research to the university, thereby facilitating our ability to recruit the best researchers and enabling them to do the best possible science."

The highly competitive award allows the University of Kansas to provide administrative, scientific and technical infrastructure to support the work of 103 research scientists at the Lawrence and Medical Center campuses as well as at the new Children's Campus of Kansas City.

These researchers have 86 research programs funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other organizations, focusing on various aspects of intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Kansas center was one of the original centers envisioned by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 to tackle developmental and intellectual impairments.

The University of Kansas is a major comprehensive research and teaching university. University Relations is the central public relations office for KU's Lawrence campus.

kunews@ku.edu | (785) 864-3256 | 1314 Jayhawk Blvd., Lawrence, KS 66045

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Personnel

Project Manager



Clark Bloomer, BS

Genomics Core
1015 Hemenway
3901 Rainbow Blvd. MS 3028
Kansas City, KS 66160
Phone: (913) 588-7127
FAX: (913) 588-7131
cbloomer@kumc.edu

Senior Research Associate



Rosanne Skinner, BS

Genomics Core
1015 Hemenway
3901 Rainbow Blvd. MS 3028
Kansas City, KS 66160
Phone: (913) 588-6927
FAX: (913) 588-7131
rskinner@kumc.edu

Research Associate



Yafen Niu

Genomics Core
1015 Hemenway
3901 Rainbow Blvd. MS 3028
Kansas City, KS 66160
Phone: (913) 588-9564
FAX: (913) 588-7131
yniu@kumc.edu

Research Associate

Veronica Cloud, Ph.D.

Genomics Core
1015 Hemenway
3901 Rainbow Blvd. MS 3028
Kansas City, KS 66160
Phone: (913) 588-7011
Fax: (913) 588-7131
vcloud@kumc.edu

Kenneth Peterson - Facility Director
kpeterson@kumc.edu
913-588-7405

Gustavo Blanco
gblanco@kumc.edu
913-588-7405

Merlin Butler
mbutler4@kumc.edu
913-588-1800

James Calvet
icalvet@kumc.edu
913-588-7424

Lane Christenson
lchristenson@kumc.edu
913-588-0420

Michael Soares
msoares@kumc.edu
913-588-5691

Kenneth McCarson
KMCCARSO@kumc.edu
913-588-7519

Peter Smith - Facility Director - ex officio member
psmith@kumc.edu
913-588-7409

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Contact KUMC

University of Kansas
Medical Center
3901 Rainbow Boulevard
Kansas City, KS 66160
913-588-5000

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