

LOUISIANA CANCER RESEARCH CENTER | 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

ADVANCING RESEARCH TOGETHER

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LCRC MISSION TO WORK ACROSS INSTITUTIONAL BOUNDARIES TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF CANCER THROUGHOUT LOUISIANA AND THE GULF REGION THROUGH LOCALLY FOCUSED HIGH-IMPACT CANCER RESEARCH, PATIENT CARE, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT IN ALIGNMENT WITH OUR UNIQUE CULTURAL, ETHNIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS.

● A TRADITION OF CANCER RESEARCH IN LOUISIANA

We know more about cancer today than ever before. Fewer people are dying of cancer, and survival rates are improving. Still, there is much more to learn. More than 300 faculty and member scientists supported by the Louisiana Cancer Research Center (LCRC) are relentless in their pursuit of novel theories and breakthrough treatments, publishing 311 peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals in 2025 alone. Their work is helping drive meaningful advances.

*We cannot let up. **Because cancer never will.***

Louisiana lawmakers knew this when they established the LCRC to foster collaboration between our state's major research institutions. Twenty-four years later, our state's scientists are working together like never before.

Case in point: 250 Louisiana cancer researchers gathered at the LCRC's 2025 annual scientific retreat, reflecting an expanded collaborative environment. Seventy research projects were selected for poster presentation, the most since we started the event over 10 years ago.

Fly Bayou, a statewide community of scientists who meet regularly to discuss their work using the *Drosophila* fruit fly model has grown exponentially. It started six years ago with just a handful of researchers has grown to include 30 labs in 14 states.

There is no end to the potential for collaboration rooted in mere face-to-face interactions. It happens all the time among scientists conversing in LCRC labs or by attending our successful speaker series, which featured 22 noted scientists in 2025.

Of course, individuals and communities play a pivotal role in cancer prevention. LCRC's outreach programs promote education, prevention and access to clinical trials around the state. Fewer people in Louisiana are smoking now thanks to improved tobacco education and smoking cessation programs and lung cancer rates have dropped in areas with smoke-free ordinances and statewide.

Still, 30,000 individuals and families across our state faced new cancer diagnoses in 2025. Louisiana Cancer Research Center scientists remain focused on what matters most — reducing the burden of cancer, *offering real reason for hope.*



— SVEN DAVISSON

BETTER TOGETHER

Hundreds of Louisiana's cancer scientists convened last summer with one goal in mind: sharing their research in pursuit of a breakthrough.

The LCRC's 2025 Scientific Retreat demonstrated the momentum of Louisiana's cancer research community. More than 250 researchers participated in person at Xavier University of Louisiana and online for presentations. Seventy research posters were selected from 100 proposals, the most ever presented at the annual event.

LCRC Co-directors Lucio Miele, PhD, and Stefan Grant, MD, JD, MBA, addressed the crowd and emphasized the importance of ongoing collaboration. Dr. Miele, director of the LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center, said that Louisiana's scientists must remain committed to working together. "What we can do on our side is remain committed to collaboration, to advocate for sustained investment in research, and to keep on planning to grow even in challenging circumstances."

Dr. Grant, director of the Tulane Cancer Center, urged attendees to use the retreat as an opportunity for networking with peers. "Please get to know the people around you... getting to know one another and their project is an essential element for us to become highly efficient and effective."

The leaders of LCRC's four research programs — Transitional Oncology, Cancer Biology, Population Sciences, and Genes X Environment — offered advice on collaborations and helpful resources. Shared resources, including core facilities at the LCRC and partner institutions, were highlighted. Leaders of the LCRC's Cancer Research, Education, and Training program presented an update on their initiatives to support undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral trainees.

LCRC Chief Administrative Officer Sven Davisson concluded the day by announcing three new funding opportunities that support innovative research, new investigators, and trainee travel.



“WHAT WE CAN DO ON OUR SIDE IS REMAIN COMMITTED TO COLLABORATION, TO ADVOCATE FOR SUSTAINED INVESTMENT IN RESEARCH, AND TO KEEP ON PLANNING TO GROW EVEN IN CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES.”

— LUCIO MIELE, PHD

A VISIT FROM THE U.S. SENATE H.E.L.P. POLICY TEAM

The Louisiana Cancer Research Center, in partnership with the LSU-LCMC Health Cancer Center and Tulane University, had the distinct honor of hosting members from the policy team of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee in August 2025. The committee is chaired by Louisiana U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, who has been a staunch advocate for cancer research and healthcare policy.

The delegation toured research labs with Dr. Stefan Grant, director of the Tulane Cancer Center, Dr. Lucio Miele, director of the LSU-LCMC Health Cancer Center, and Sven Davisson, LCRC chief administrative officer.

Melody Baddoo, manager of Tulane Cancer Center’s Next Generation Sequence Analysis Core, and Tulane researcher Erik Flemington, PhD, introduced the visitors to their work and provided valuable insights into the impact of federal funding policy. The group engaged in an in-depth dialogue with LCRC representatives emphasizing that such support is not only beneficial but essential to driving innovation.

“Federal support fuels innovation across the entire cancer research continuum, from laboratory discovery to clinical impact,” Dr. Grant said. “Opportunities to showcase our collaborative work and engage policymakers firsthand help reinforce why sustained investment in cancer research is essential to improving outcomes for patients everywhere.”

PICTURED ABOVE LEFT: TULANE CANCER CENTER’S ERIK FLEMINGTON, PHD AND MELODY BADDOO MET WITH THE H.E.L.P. POLICY TEAM IN AUGUST 2025.



NOVEL PERSPECTIVES: LCRC SPEAKER SERIES

Twenty-two scientists from some of the country's most prominent research institutions presented their work as part of The Louisiana Cancer Research Center's annual speaker series. Presenters were selected by the LCRC's Translational Oncology, Population Sciences, Cancer Biology and Genes X Environment programs. The talks were well attended by researchers in New Orleans and around the state online.

JEFFREY M. ROSEN, PHD

Professor, Molecular Biology, Dan L. Duncan Comprehensive Cancer Center, Baylor College of Medicine
"Leveraging Preclinical Models of Triple Negative Breast Cancer for Translational Research"

ADAM LEVENTHAL, PHD

Executive Director, USC Institute for Addiction Science, University Professor, Population & Public Health Sciences and Psychology University of Southern California Los Angeles
"Non-Comubsted Nicotine Products: Implications for Cancer Control"

ANNA COGHILL, PHD

Associate Professor, Department of Oncologic Sciences, Morsani College of Medicine University of South Florida Moffitt Cancer Center
"Accelerated Genomic Aging in Cancer Patients with HIV"

MELODY SCHIAFFINO, PHD

Associate Professor, Radiation Medicine and Applied Sciences, UC San Diego School of Medicine UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center
"Leveraging Informatics to Improve Cancer Care Delivery to Older Adults"

JENNIFER FOSTER, PHD

Director, Developmental Therapeutics Program Baylor College of Medicine
"Drug Development in Neuroblastoma: A Path to Improving Survival"

HAN LIANG, PHD, FAAAS, FAIMBE

Professor and Deputy Chair, Department of Bioinformatics and Computational Biology The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
"AI, Big Data and Cancer Systems"

KAM LEONG, PHD

Samuel Y. Sheng Professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering Columbia University
"Design of Nucleic Acid-Binding Polymers for Inflammatory Diseases"

WEIHANG (VALERIE) CHAI, PHD

Professor and Director, Center for Genetic Diseases, Department of Microbiology and Immunology Chicago Medical School, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science
"How does Calcium Signaling Protect Genomes Stability during DNA Replication?"

KIAN-HUAT LIM, PHD

Professor, Director of GI Oncology, Division of Medical Oncology, Department of Internal Medicine Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis
"Novel KRAS-MAPK inhibitor combinations in pancreatic cancer"

IMMACULATA DE VIVO, PHD

Melanie Mason Niemeic '71 Faculty Codirector of the Sciences at Harvard Radcliff Institute, Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Editor-in-Chief, Cancer Causes and Control Harvard
"Epidemiology of Endometrial Cancer Consortium (E2C2): A unique window into EC disparities"

QIANG SHEN, PHD

Professor LSUHSC LCMC Health
"Developing Therapeutic Agents for Breast Cancer Interception"

WEI QUI, MD

Professor Loyola University Chicago
"Focal Adhesion Kinase, A Key Player in Liver Cancer"

MARK MONDRINOS, PHD

Assistant Professor of Biomedical Engineering Tulane University
"What's Your Nam? New Approach Methodologies for Lung Cancer Research"

LOGAN SPECTOR, PHD

Professor, Division Director, Division of Pediatric Epidemiology & Clinical Research, Faculty, Department of Pediatrics, Faculty, Brain Tumor Program, Suzanne Holmes Hodder Chair in Pediatric Cancer Research, Children's Cancer Research Fund University of Minnesota
"Neither Big Nor Easy: Germline Genetic Investigation of Childhood Cancers"

XIAOCHAO TAN, PHD

Assistant Professor of Hematology & Oncology Tulane University
"The Golgi Apparatus as a Therapeutic Target in Lung Cancer"

WEISHAN HUANG, PHD

Assistant Professor of Immunology LSU School of Veterinary Medicine
"Modulating of TCR Signaling for Sustainable Adoptive T Cell Therapy"

PETER ZHOU, MD, PHD

Professor, Madeline F. James & Edith D. Gardner Endowed Chair, Co-director, Center for Cancer and Metabolism, Co-leader, MCO Program, Markey Cancer Center University of Kentucky
"Roles of NNMT in Breast Cancer Progression and Metastasis"

RON LYNCH, PHD

Professor, Tulane University School of Medicine, LCRC Translational Oncology Program Co-Leader Tulane University School of Medicine
"Non-invasive analysis of angiogenesis and the tumor microenvironment"

PATRICIA MORENO, PHD

Assistant Professor Division of Prevention Science & Community Health Department of Public Health Sciences University of Miami Miller School of Medicine
"Addressing Quality of Life and Supportive Care Needs among People Living with Metastatic Cancer"

XUEQIAN ZHUANG, PHD

Senior Research Scientist Cancer Biology and Genetics Program Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
"Ironing out wrinkles – a story about aging and iron metabolism"

ALANA WELM, PHD

Senior Director of Basic Science, Huntsman Comprehensive Cancer Center, Chair and Professor of Oncological Sciences University of Utah
"Modeling Metastatic Breast Cancer to Advance Therapeutic Strategies"

WEI XU, PHD

Marian A. Messerschmidt Professor of Oncology, Associate Director, McArdle Laboratory for Cancer Research, Co-Director, Genetic and Epigenetic Mechanism Program, Carbone Cancer Center University of Wisconsin-Madison
"Translating Estrogen Receptor and Cofactor Dependencies into Precision Breast Cancer Therapies"



“AGING IS THE #1 RISK FACTOR FOR CANCER,” SAID XUEQIAN ZHUANG, PHD, MEMORIAL SLOAN KETTERING CANCER CENTER. DR. ZHUANG PRESENTED “IRONING OUT WRINKLES – A STORY ABOUT AGING AND IRON METABOLISM.”

PILOT AWARDS: CATALYST FOR CANCER DISCOVERIES

The Louisiana Cancer Research Center’s Pilot Award program provides our state’s researchers with critical seed funds to take the next step in developing their hypotheses. Fifteen emerging and established researchers received awards and actively used the funds in 2025 to support the initial stages of high-potential projects to explore innovative concepts, conduct preliminary research, and gather critical data, paving the way for larger-scale studies and increased success in obtaining extramural funding.

“The LCRC Pilot Award funding supports our efforts in advancing the development of a new generation of anticancer therapies aimed at improving patient outcomes. One of the major challenges in treating colorectal cancer is that many current therapies gradually lose effectiveness as cancer cells adapt and develop resistance. Our project addresses this by designing a single drug molecule capable of blocking two critical proteins that cancer cells rely on for growth and division. By targeting both proteins simultaneously, this strategy has the potential to improve treatment effectiveness and reduce the likelihood of drug resistance compared to therapies that act on only one target. Ultimately, this approach could lead to safer, longer-lasting treatments with fewer side effects than current multi-drug regimens that often require higher doses to treat resistant cancers.”



— SIVA MURRU, PHD
Associate Professor, School of Sciences
University of Louisiana at Monroe

SEED AWARDS

SHILE HUANG, PHD, LSU Health - New Orleans - "mTOR regulation of the phosphorylation of mSin1"

AMELIA JERNIGAN, MD, LSU Health, New Orleans - "Hyperthermic intraperitoneal chemotherapy for endometrial cancer in South Louisiana"

LI LI, MD, PHD, Ochsner Health - "Targeting cancer stem cells stage II/III rectal cancer to improve the response of chemoradiopathy"

JUSTIN BROWN, PHD, Pennington Biomedical Research Center - "Exercise and Thymus Function"

SRIKANTA DASH, PHD, Tulane University - "How the hepatic maladaptive plasticity relates to HCV microbial stress promotes HCC in the cirrhotic liver"

WU-MIN DENG, PHD, Tulane University - "Tumor microenvironment and innate immune response in sexual-dimorphic tumor growth"

ZHEN LIN, MD, PHD, Tulane University - "Developing a primate-like small animal model to investigate Epstein-Barr virus (EBV)-mediated immunoevasion"

YAN DONG, PHD, Tulane University - "Androgen Receptors"

SIVA MURRU, PHD, University of Louisiana Monroe - "Development of Pyrazole-Based Molecular Hybrids as Potent Dual Kinase Inhibitors"

NEW INVESTIGATOR AWARDS

FOKHRUL HOSSAIN, PHD, LSU Health, New Orleans - "Understanding Cancer Stem Cell Metabolism in Triple-Negative Breast Cancer"

ASHAD ALAM, PHD, Ochsner Health - "Translational Informatics Exploration on Pre-Cancer Routes and Cancer Prediction in Populations Stratified for Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Location"

JORGE BELGODERE, PHD, Tulane University - "Modelling tumor progression and drug resistance using 2D and 3D decellularized approaches and bio fabricated patient-derived tumor scaffolds"

JENNIFER FANG, PHD, Tulane University - "Understanding the Role of EndMT Master Transcription Factors in Angiogenesis and Cancer Progression"

KRISTEN LIMBACH, MD, Tulane University - "Machine learning to increase the accuracy of non-invasive diagnosis and staging of gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine neoplasms"

BRIGHAM WALKER, PHD, Tulane University - "Medicaid Disenrollment: Plan Choices, Care Outcomes, and Financial Health Among Cancer Patients"

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH AWARDS

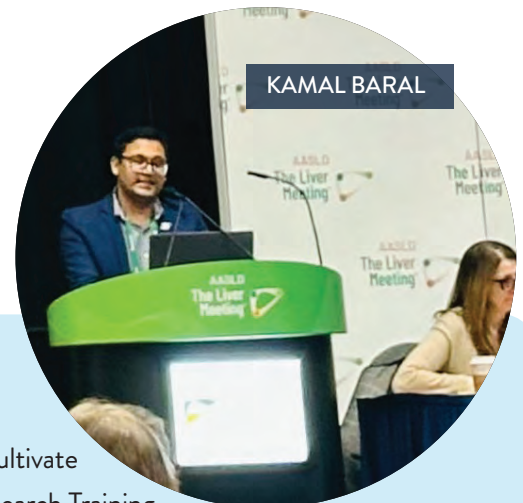
SURESH ALAHARI, PHD, LSU Health, New Orleans - "A small molecule inhibitor of a novel target for treatment of Triple Negative Breast Cancer"

KRIS REISS, PHD, LSU Health, New Orleans - "Therapeutic evaluation of aldoxorubicin for breast cancer brain metastasis"

QIANG SHEN, MD, PHD, LSU Health, New Orleans - "MitoNEET/CISD1 Mediates Diet-relevant Energy Metabolism and Promotes Breast Cancer Development"

VICTORIA BELANCIO, PHD, Tulane University - "Effect of exposure to light at night on L1 mRNA expression and retrotransposition"

MICHAEL HOERGER, PHD, Tulane University - "Reducing Health Disparities in Lung Cancer Screening"



2025 TRAVEL AWARDS

The Louisiana Cancer Research Center's training and education programs to cultivate the next generation of our state's cancer researchers. The LCRC's Cancer Research Training & Education Coordination (CRTEC) program Awarded travel grants to undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral trainees to enrich their LCRC- affiliated laboratory work and introduce them to nationally respected research conferences.

KAMAL BARAL, a 5th-year PhD student in the Laboratory of Dr. Bilon Khambu, was awarded the LCRC Travel Award to present his research at The Annual Liver Meeting 2025 in Washington, D.C., held November 7–11. His work was selected for an oral presentation: "Transcriptional Regulation of the Hepatic Acetylome by Nrf2 in Autophagy-Impaired Liver" (Recipient of the LCRC Travel Award), and his poster presentation, "Autophagy Zonation and its role in Liver Metabolism."

PREVENTING CANCER IN COMMUNITIES

The LCRC's work to reduce cancer extends beyond the laboratory, into communities across the state. It requires a coordinated effort to educate community members and health advocates about programs that support regular checkups, screenings, awareness of cancer symptoms and access to clinical trials.

The Louisiana Cancer Research Center's Office of Community Engagement and its statewide partners accomplished that in 2025.

• TAKING ON VAPING •



The annual Promising Practices Conference on Community Health, held at LSU Shreveport, focused on the worsening vaping epidemic among Louisiana's youth.

One in five middle school students and one in four high school students vape — a serious health issue of immense concern to parents, teachers and health advocates.

Participants connected in breakout sessions, sharing experiences and insights about vaping risks, trends and misconceptions. A panel of

LCRC partners also outlined services for smoking

cessation, cancer prevention and treatment, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in reducing cancer across Louisiana.

Community health researcher and keynote speaker Shakiera Causey, PhD, noted an increase in marketing of vaping products aimed at young people as cigarette use has declined. Many vapes deliver more nicotine in a single hit than an entire cigarette. "Studies now show links between vaping and chronic lung damage. It rewires developing brains for addiction. And whose brains are still developing until age 25? Our youth," she said.

The Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living, an LCRC program, works year-round to reduce smoking and vaping across the state.

The LCRC also supported the Southern University Agricultural Research & Extension Center's Communities of Color Network (CoC) in its statewide effort to reduce tobacco-related health disparities among populations disproportionately impacted by tobacco use, including African Americans, low-income communities and LGBTQ+ individuals.

CoC conducted comprehensive outreach to youth, adults and mixed audiences across Louisiana, reaching 38,742 individuals through schools, colleges, faith-based organizations, community events and national tobacco control observances.



During that time, CoC presented 186 program activities focused on preventing tobacco initiation, reducing secondhand smoke exposure and promoting cessation services, including referrals to the Louisiana Quitline.

A core strategy of the Communities of Color Network is the 100% Tobacco-Free Church Initiative, which supports interfaith congregations — primarily within the African American faith community — in adopting comprehensive tobacco-free campus policies.

As of June 2025, 249 churches statewide maintained 100% tobacco-free campus policies.

NFL LEGEND **TACKLES** MEN'S HEALTH

During Super Bowl LIX week in New Orleans, cancer survivor, NFL Legend and Louisiana native **TERRY BRADSHAW** discussed men's health including his own cancer experience at an event sponsored by the Al Copeland Foundation Cancer Association of Louisiana. LCRC Board Member **Walter Leger Jr.** moderated the event.





COLLABORATION TAKES OFF: FLY BAYOU

Six years ago, a handful of researchers from Tulane and LSU started meeting online to share their work using the fruit fly, known as *Drosophila melanogaster*, which has biological pathways and genetics similar to humans. Other researchers became interested so they created a research community and named it “Fly Bayou” to represent its deep South Louisiana origin.

Today, Fly Bayou includes 30 *Drosophila* labs in 14 states. They held their second symposium at LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans in August 2025.

What started as a small virtual community formed to help Louisiana scientists with limited *Drosophila* research has now attracted labs and scientists as far away as Missouri, Oklahoma, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Utah.

Dr. Yoichiro Tamori, Ph.D., assistant professor of Biology at the University of Louisiana Lafayette, traveled to the 2025 symposium.

“I was impressed by the diversity of the research content and the exceptionally high standard of the presented studies. I intend to continue participating, contributing to the development of this group and to research activities in this region,” he said.





THE JI LABORATORY (pictured from left):
Rajitha Hemba-Waduge, PhD;
Mengmeng Liu, PhD; and Jun-yuan Ji, PhD

FRUIT FLIES HELP SCIENTISTS LEARN HOW CELLS PROTECT THEIR CHROMOSOMES

Even though fruit flies are tiny, they are extremely useful for studying human health. In fact, about 75% of the genes that cause disease in humans have similar versions in fruit flies. That's why Tulane Cancer Center scientists are using fruit flies in their research.

"Fruit flies help us understand how cells work in both healthy and diseased conditions," said Jun-yuan Ji, PhD, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology and LCRC faculty member. "They allow us to study complicated processes like infection, inflammation, brain function, and cancer in ways that can help improve human health."

Dr. Ji and his team published new findings in the journal *Science Advances* about how cells protect their genetic material. Inside every cell are chromosomes, which carry genetic information in DNA. At the ends of chromosomes are telomeres, protective caps that keep chromosomes from getting damaged when cells divide. In most living organisms, telomeres are maintained by an enzyme called telomerase. But fruit flies and many insects use a very different strategy.

Instead of telomerase, fruit flies use special pieces of DNA elements (known as telomeric-specific retrotransposons) that can copy themselves and attach to the ends of chromosomes. This helps rebuild telomeres as cells continue dividing. Scientists have known about this unusual process for years, but they did not fully understand how fruit flies control the transcription of these retrotransposons.

The Tulane research team, led by Mengmeng Liu, PhD, also an LCRC faculty member, discovered that fruit flies manage this process using a small group of important cellular regulators called the mediator complex. These regulators help control when and how much telomere-building activity happens. They are also involved in the cell cycle, the organized process that controls how cells grow and divide.

By connecting telomere maintenance to the cell cycle, fruit flies can protect their chromosomes while preventing telomeres from becoming too long or too short.

This research shows how evolution has developed different ways to solve the same important problem: protecting DNA. Studying these strategies in simple organisms like fruit flies can help scientists better understand chromosome stability, which plays a major role in cancer, aging, and many genetic diseases.

“Fruit flies help us understand how cells work in both healthy and diseased conditions. They allow us to study complicated processes like infection, inflammation, brain function, and cancer in ways that can help improve human health.”

— JUN-YUAN JI, PHD,
Professor of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology
Tulane Cancer Center



INTERNATIONAL STUDY IDENTIFIES PROTEINS LINKED TO PROSTATE CANCER

An international study has identified dozens of blood proteins linked to prostate cancer risk, some shared across populations and others unique to specific groups. Published in Nature Communications, the study advances understanding of how biological differences across populations influence prostate cancer risk.

The research was led by Dr. Lang Wu, Associate Director of Population Science at the LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center, further highlighting Louisiana's growing role in cutting-edge cancer research.

"This study shows how population-specific biology shapes prostate cancer risk," said Dr. Wu, who also serves as Professor and Co-Director of the Population Sciences and Cancer Control Program. "By including diverse populations, we're taking an important step toward understanding why some men, including many in Louisiana, face a higher risk of developing this common malignancy."

Prostate cancer is one of the most frequently diagnosed cancers among men worldwide and a leading cause of cancer-related death. Men of African ancestry, including many in Louisiana, experience higher incidence and mortality rates, underscoring the need for research that reflects diverse populations.

The study analyzed thousands of blood proteins across African, European, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino populations. Using advanced statistical genetics and data science approaches, researchers developed models to predict protein levels based on genetic information and linked those genetically regulated proteins to prostate cancer risk. The analysis leveraged data from 156,319 men diagnosed with prostate cancer and 788,443 men without the disease.

In total, researchers identified 83 prostate cancer-associated proteins across populations. Many of the proteins discovered are novel and may serve as promising targets for future risk assessment and therapeutic development.

The research was supported in part by National Institutes of Health grants U54 HG013243, R01CA263494, and U01CA293883.

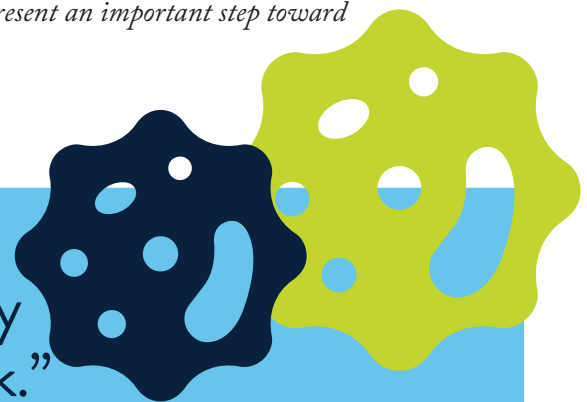
Research that improves risk assessment and supports more personalized prevention and treatment strategies is central to the Cancer Center's mission to reduce cancer burden across Louisiana and beyond. For Louisiana communities disproportionately affected by prostate cancer, these findings represent an important step toward more informed screening, prevention, and targeted care.



**new
FACULTY**

"This study shows how population-specific biology shapes prostate cancer risk."

— DR. LANG WU, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF POPULATION SCIENCE AT THE LSU LCMC HEALTH CANCER CENTER





RESEARCHERS REVEAL KEY IMMUNE DIFFERENCES IN TRIPLE-NEGATIVE BREAST CANCER

Researchers at the LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center have published new findings in *npj Breast Cancer* that shed light on biological features of triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), one of the most aggressive forms of breast cancer.

TNBC lacks hormone receptors and HER2 protein expression, which limits treatment options and contributes to poor outcomes. The NCI-funded study, led by Dr. Lucio Miele, director of the LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center and co-director of the LCRC, examined tumor biology in more than 250 Black and White women in Louisiana, balancing age, cancer stage, and other factors to better understand differences in tumor biology separate from external influences.

KEY DISCOVERIES FROM THE RESEARCH INCLUDE:

- ▶ **RACE IS NOT AN INHERENT PREDICTOR OF SURVIVAL.** While TNBC outcomes have historically varied by race, this study found that worse outcomes among Black women are more likely due to later diagnosis and socioeconomic barriers to care rather than intrinsic tumor biology.
- ▶ **A NEW MOLECULAR SUBTYPE WAS IDENTIFIED.** Researchers discovered a previously unrecognized TNBC subtype with distinct biological characteristics, offering potential avenues for future targeted therapies.
- ▶ **IMMUNE DIFFERENCES MAY GUIDE FUTURE TREATMENTS.** Tumors from Black women showed higher levels of certain immune cells, particularly B-cells, which are associated with improved treatment response and longer survival. These immune signatures may open opportunities for precision immunotherapy in TNBC.



"Triple-negative breast cancer is one of the hardest cancers to treat because it lacks targeted therapies," said Dr. Miele. "It is not a single group of tumors. It's made up of many biologically different subtypes. By better understanding the genetic and immune landscapes of these tumors in Louisiana women, we can move closer to developing treatments tailored to each patient's biology, improving survival and reducing healthcare gaps."

TNBC disproportionately affects Black women in Louisiana and nationwide. Louisiana also has among the highest breast cancer death rates in the United States, making research into TNBC biology and treatment especially urgent.



TULANE SURGEON LAUNCHES SPECIALIZED COLORECTAL CANCER TREATMENT

DR. KRISTEN LIMBACH, TULANE (left), with
DR. KEVIN SULLIVAN, LSU HEALTH NEW ORLEANS.

Kristen Limbach, MD, a Tulane surgical oncologist and LCRC faculty member successfully performed the first hepatic arterial infusion (HAI) pump placement at East Jefferson General Hospital in New Orleans. The highly specialized procedure, which delivers high-dose chemotherapy directly to the liver, marks the launch of a new HAI pump program designed to improve outcomes for patients with liver-dominant cancers, such as metastatic colorectal cancer.

This achievement is especially significant for New Orleans and the Gulf South, where colorectal cancer rates and related mortality are among the highest in the nation. Louisiana ranks near the top in late-stage colorectal cancer diagnoses, and more than 50% of colorectal cancer patients will develop liver metastases during the course of their disease. Historically, access to hepatic arterial infusion pump therapy has been limited to a handful of centers nationwide, forcing Southern patients to travel long distances for care.

Dr. Limbach was joined in the operating room by LCRC faculty member Dr. Kevin Sullivan, a surgical oncologist with LSU Health New Orleans, who is establishing a similar program at University Medical Center. Their partnership reflects a united commitment across institutions to advancing cancer care in Louisiana.

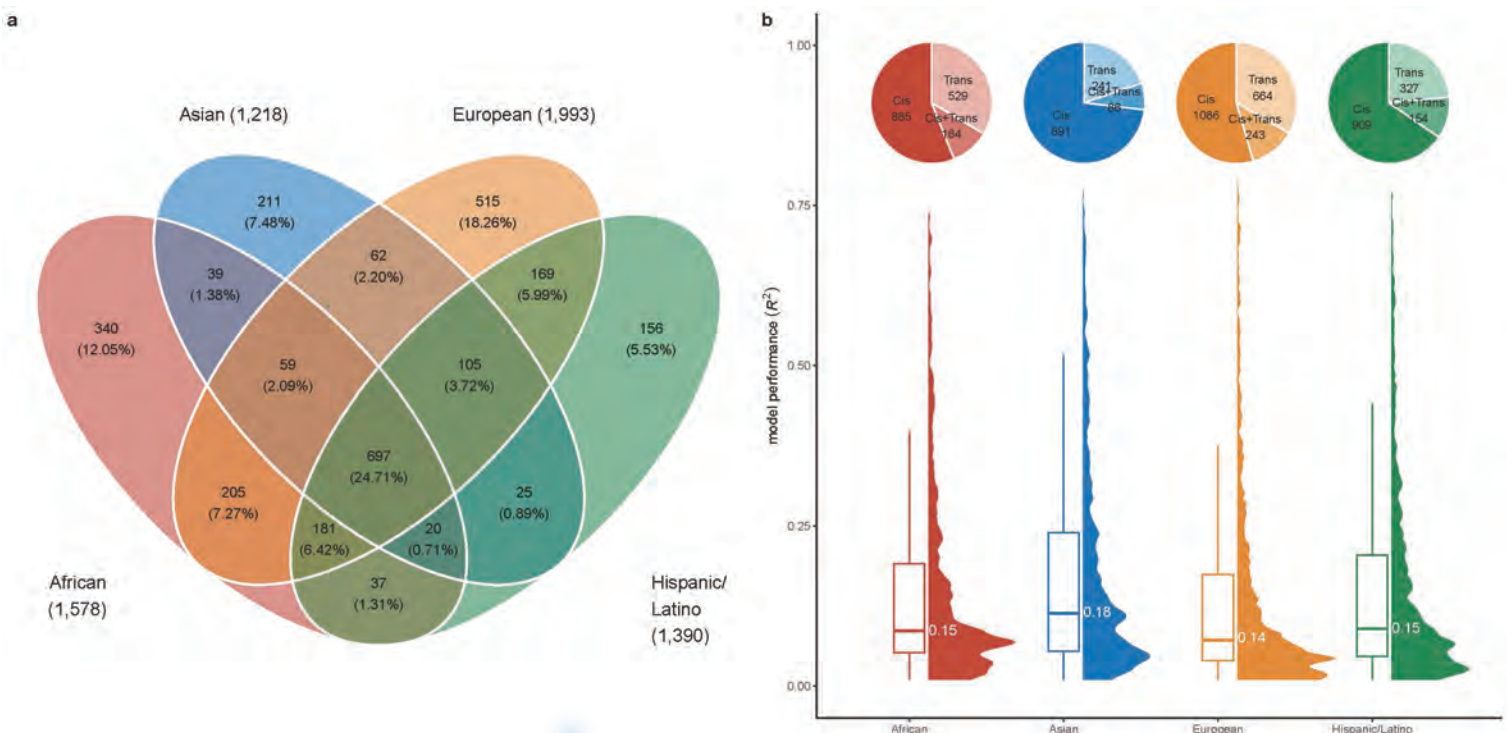
THE NATIONAL EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND PROSTATE CANCER DISPARITIES

LSU Health New Orleans is a participating site in the **RESPOND Study (Research on Prostate Cancer in Men of African Ancestry: Defining the Roles of Genetics, Tumor Markers and Social Stress)**, a national research initiative focused on understanding why African American men face a disproportionately high burden of prostate cancer. Led by Dr. Xiaocheng Wu, Director of the Louisiana Tumor Registry at LSU Health New Orleans and LCRC faculty member, **RESPOND** is the largest study ever to examine biological, environmental, and social contributors to prostate cancer risk and outcomes in Black men.

African American men are more likely than men of any other race to develop prostate cancer, and they also experience higher rates of aggressive disease and mortality. However, the underlying causes remain poorly understood. **RESPOND** brings together researchers from over a dozen leading institutions to address these unanswered questions.

To date, more than 12,500 African American men diagnosed with prostate cancer across multiple states including California, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and Florida have participated in the study by completing detailed surveys and providing samples such as saliva and tumor tissue. This data is being used to investigate how genes, social stressors, and tumor characteristics collectively contribute to risk, disease progression, and survival.

LSU Health New Orleans' involvement helps ensure that men in Louisiana and the Gulf South are represented in this critical research effort. The **RESPOND** Study is supported by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities of the National Institutes of Health, with additional funding from the Prostate Cancer Foundation.



CANCERCONNECT BRINGS MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCHERS TOGETHER TO FIGHT CANCER



Stephen Ostertag, associate professor of sociology in the School of Liberal Arts, and Loren Gragert, assistant professor of biomedical informatics and genomics in the School of Medicine, were among the faculty members who attended the most recent CancerConnect event on Tulane's uptown campus.

How do researchers begin collaborations with each other when they work in different fields? At the CancerConnect events co-hosted by the Tulane Cancer Center, it looks a lot like speed dating.

At an October 2025 event between the Tulane Cancer Center and the Tulane University School of Liberal Arts, philosophers talked with health policy experts, sociologists had conversations with pharmacologists and epidemiologists and anthropologists found common ground.

"All of us have a shared goal of finding better treatment options and ultimately cures for cancer," said Dr. Stefan Grant, director of the Tulane Cancer Center. "Collaboration is paramount to achieving these goals. By bringing together researchers from different fields and backgrounds, we can explore how new ideas and perspectives can drive progress in cancer research and care."

It was the third such iteration of CancerConnect, a series of events that is designed to connect members of the Cancer Center, which is housed within the School of Medicine, with researchers across all schools.

The School of Liberal Arts might at first appear to be an unlikely partner for cancer research, but philosophers in the school study medical ethics, a sociologist examines trust in healthcare providers, and an anthropologist is researching how social contexts impact health.

“By bringing together researchers from different fields and backgrounds, we can explore how new ideas and perspectives can drive progress in cancer research and care.”

— STEFAN GRANT, MD, JD
TULANE CANCER CENTER DIRECTOR

“The humanities and social sciences offer new ways of thinking about some of the most complex problems, and when scholars from the liberal arts engage with medical researchers, unexpected discoveries emerge along the way,” said School of Liberal Arts Dean Brian T. Edwards, who became a Tulane Cancer Center Member following the event. “Whether this opens up new approaches to treatment and care, or deeper understanding of how doctors and their patients approach their interactions around cancer — or many other possibilities raised in our meetings — this partnership offers an exciting new avenue for future cross-disciplinary work.”

To get conversations started, the organizers highlighted three topics that represent the type of interdisciplinary research the Cancer Center facilitates: sex differences in health outcomes; cancer communication and health literacy; and economics, ethics, AI and health policy. Each of these complex topics is better understood when multiple researchers look at them from a variety of perspectives across academic disciplines.

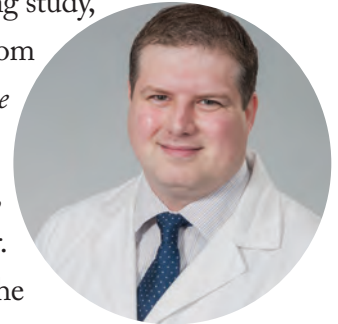
The Cancer Center previously hosted successful events in collaboration with Tulane University's Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and the School of Science and Engineering. The collaborations that began at those events have already borne fruit. Researchers are initiating projects, including research into head and neck cancer, and applying for joint grants, with one paper already submitted for publication. And thirteen faculty members have applied for membership in the Cancer Center, which comes with access to projects and resources related to cancer research.

The collaborations that began in conversations at CancerConnect could spark the next phase of cancer research, building on work like the bipartisan-funded MAGIC-SCAN project led by Tulane Cancer Center members Quincy Brown, professor of biomedical engineering, and Brian Summa, associate professor of computer science.



OCHSNER RESEARCH LEADS GROUNDBREAKING FINDINGS FOR MULTI-CANCER EARLY DETECTION (MCED)

The Ochsner Cancer Institute has played a pivotal role in advancing cancer detection through its participation in a groundbreaking study, entitled, “Real-World data and clinical experience from 100,000 multi-cancer early detection tests,” published in *Nature Communications*. Marc Matrana, MD, medical oncologist and system medical director of precision medicine at the Ochsner Cancer Institute, and LCRC faculty member, served as the lead author.



This research evaluates the real-world performance of the Galleri® multi-cancer early detection (MCED) test, an innovative blood test that analyzes patterns in cell-free DNA to detect cancer signals long before symptoms appear. The test also helps identify the origin of the cancer, guiding a more direct and efficient diagnostic process. The study involved 111,080 participants from diverse healthcare settings, such as private practices and health systems. Key findings from the study underscore the test’s effectiveness in detecting and diagnosing cancer. A cancer signal was identified in 0.91% of participants, resulting in the discovery of 1,011 cancers. Among cases in which a cancer type was reported, the test accurately predicted the cancer’s origin in 87% of instances. In addition, the test demonstrated strong diagnostic efficiency, with a median time of just 39.5 days between a positive test result and confirmed cancer diagnosis—highlighting its potential to streamline patient care and accelerate clinical decision-making.

“This research represents a significant step forward in the fight against cancer,” said Dr. Matrana. “The Galleri® test has the potential to revolutionize cancer screening and early detection, improving outcomes and saving lives.”

EDUCATING COMMUNITIES ABOUT BREAST CANCER

More than 4,000 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in Louisiana in 2025 — making it the second most common cancer in the state, behind prostate cancer. While the diagnosis rate is similar to the national average, Louisiana women are dying of breast cancer at a rate 14% higher than the national average.

According to LCRC faculty member Jasmin Eugene, PharmD, BCOP, who is also an assistant clinical professor at Xavier University of Louisiana, women are taking this elevated breast cancer risk seriously, undergoing screenings higher than the national average. “Seventy-four-percent of women from 2018 to 2022 were up to date on their mammograms compared to only 67% nationwide, so we are doing something right,” Dr. Eugene told a roomful of women at the Hope and Healing Community Conversation hosted by Xavier’s Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities for Research and Education and sponsored by the Louisiana Cancer Research Center. “Louisiana has the third-highest screening rate in the country,” Dr. Eugene noted optimistically. “However, breast cancer impacts people differently.”

Dr. Eugene said Black women are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer than white women, despite having similar incidence and screening rates. Research is revealing a similar trend among Native American women. Minority women have higher mortality rates because they tend to have more aggressive tumors, such as triple-negative breast cancer, an aggressive cancer that is more difficult to treat.

That reality underscores the importance of regular mammograms. Denise Cox, BS, PN of the Louisiana Breast and Cervical Health Program, shared information on low and no-cost screenings for qualified applicants between the ages of 21 and 64. The organization, administered by the LSU School of Public Health, has patient navigators who can help steer women to screening appointments throughout the state.

The event at Xavier University in New Orleans was held in October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and was just one of many to remind Louisianans of the resources that are available to prevent cancer. “Having events like these allows us to meet people where they are so we can have critical conversations to hopefully improve health outcomes,” said LaKeisha Williams, PhD, Co-Lead of LCRC’s Population Sciences & Disparities scientific program and associate professor at Xavier University of Louisiana’s College of Pharmacy.



Members of the Carrollton Hollygrove Senior Center attended the “Hope and Healing” breast cancer event at Xavier University of Louisiana.



SENIOR SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP



FERN TSIEN, PHD
*Associate Director
Cancer Research Training
Professor
LSU Health - New Orleans*



MICHAEL D. CELESTIN, JR., PHD
*Director, Tobacco Control Initiative
Assistant Professor
LSU Health - New Orleans*



JAYALAKSHMI SHRIDHAR, PHD
*Assistant Director
Cancer Research Education & Training
Associate Professor
Xavier University of Louisiana*



SHALINI KULASINGAM, PHD, MPH
*Associate Director, Population Sciences
Professor
Tulane University*



VICTORIA P. BELANCIO, PHD
*Assistant Director
Cancer Research Education & Training
Associate Professor
Tulane University School of Medicine*



CHARLES WOODS, PHD
*Assistant Director
Cancer Research Education & Training
Professor, LSU Health New Orleans*

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM LEADERSHIP



KRZYSZTOF REISS, PHD
*Co-Lead, Cancer Biology
Professor of Medicine
Department of Medicine
Director, Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center
Neurological Cancer Research program
LSU Health - New Orleans*



TIFFANY N. SEAGROVES, PHD
*Co-Lead, Cancer Biology
Professor
Tulane University School of Medicine*



CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS, PHD
*Cabinet Member/Co-Lead, Cancer Biology
Professor and Chair, Division of
Basic Pharmaceutical Sciences
Xavier University*



ZACHARY PURSELL, PHD
*Co-Lead, Genes X Environment
Associate Professor, Department of
Biochemistry & Molecular Biology
Tulane University School of Medicine*



JOHN T. WEST, PHD
*Co-Lead, Genes X Environment
Professor
LSU Health - New Orleans*



QIANG SHEN, MD, PHD
*Co-Lead, Translational Oncology
Professor
LSU Health - New Orleans*



GUANGDI WANG, PHD
*Co-Lead, Translational Oncology
Professor of Chemistry
Xavier University*



MICHAEL HOERGER, PHD
*Co-Lead, Cancer Population
Sciences & Disparities
Assistant Professor of
Psychology & Psychiatry
Tulane University School of Medicine*



EDWARD TRAPIDO, SCD, FACE
*Co-Lead, Cancer Population
Sciences & Disparities
Interim Dean, School of Public Health
LSU Health - New Orleans*



LAKEISHA WILLIAMS, PHD
*Co-Lead, Cancer Population
Sciences & Disparities
Associate
Xavier University*

SHALINI KULASINGAM, PHD, MPH, *takes on DUAL CANCER PREVENTION ROLE*

In July 2025, Shalini Kulasingam, PHD, MPH, joined Tulane University's Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine as the founding director of the school's newly established Center for Cancer Prevention and Control. Dr. Kulasingam also serves as associate director of population science at the Tulane Cancer Center, and at the Louisiana Cancer Research Center, where she collaborates with cancer population health researchers across LCRC's partner institutions.

"Dr. Kulasingam's interdisciplinary expertise and global leadership in cancer prevention will significantly advance the school's mission in strengthening cancer control across the Gulf South, shaping national public health policy, and improving health outcomes for populations worldwide" said Thomas LaVeist, PHD, Dean of the Weatherhead School of Public Health, noting that cancer prevention is a key strategic priority for the school.

Previously at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health, Kulasingam served as a member of the Masonic Cancer Center's Screening, Prevention, Etiology, and Cancer Survivorship (SPECS) Program. Her research primarily focuses on the prevention and control of cervical cancer, with a particular emphasis on human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and screening strategies.

Through her work, she has significantly influenced cervical cancer screening and prevention policies globally. Notably, she contributed to Australia's adoption of the HPV vaccine, positioning the country to eliminate HPV as a public health issue within the next two decades. Her research has also examined cancer screening in Canada, Singapore, and several African nations.

Beyond her focus on HPV, Kulasingam has applied her expertise in mathematical modeling to address other public health challenges, including collaborating with the Minnesota Department of Health and the Governor's office during the COVID-19 pandemic to analyze transmission dynamics and inform policy decisions.



SVEN DAVISSON, *Louisiana Cancer Research Center Associate Director of Administration* was REAPPOINTED

TO THE BOARD OF THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT RESEARCH INSTITUTES (AIRI). During his two-year term, Davisson will serve as the organization's treasurer.



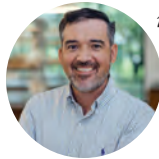
He has served the organization in various roles since 2012.

AIRI is a national association of independent, not-for-profit biomedical and behavioral research institutes whose mission is to enhance the ability of its members to improve human health and advance knowledge through networking, education, and involvement in the development of science policy.

Davisson has served in executive positions at the LCRC since 2015. The LCRC is a partnership bringing together the cancer research efforts of Louisiana State University Health New Orleans, Tulane University School of Medicine, Xavier University of Louisiana, and Ochsner Health.

Davisson previously spent 14 years at The Jackson Laboratory (JAX), an NCI-designated cancer center in Bar Harbor, Maine.

J. QUINCY BROWN, PHD, *Tulane University biomedical engineering professor & the Mark and Diana Tipton Endowed Professor in the School of Science & Engineering* NAMED A 2025 FELLOW OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF INVENTORS (NAI)



for his groundbreaking work developing cutting-edge imaging technologies that will save lives by making cancer easier to detect, understand and treat.

In 2024, Dr. Brown's Tulane-based project, MAGIC-SCAN, received national attention with a presidential visit and up to \$23 million in funding from the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H), a bipartisan effort to advance high-impact biomedical research. The goal of MAGIC-SCAN is to give doctors the ability to confirm within minutes after surgery that they have removed all remnants of cancer from the surgery site. Being named a National Academy of Inventors Fellow is further recognition of the value of Brown's work, as it is the highest professional distinction awarded solely to inventors.

“Quincy Brown is an extraordinary innovator whose work is redefining what is possible in the fight against cancer,” Tulane President Michael A. Fitts said. “With determination and a profound sense of purpose, he has translated breakthrough ideas into technologies that promise to transform care and give hope to cancer patients around the world. Quincy’s work is a prime example of the breadth and impact of Tulane research, and his relentless pursuit reflects the goal of our mission, which is as simple as it is bold — to improve and save lives.”

Brown holds 27 patents covering groundbreaking optical imaging technologies for medical diagnostics. His patents include foundational work in spectral tissue analysis, automated biopsy processing systems and digital pathology tools capable of imaging entire cancer tumors within minutes. Together, these technologies shorten diagnosis times, reduce repeat surgeries, improve surgical precision and enable more personalized cancer care.

In 2017, Brown co-founded Instapath Inc. with former PHD students Peter Lawson, David Tulman and Mei Wang to commercialize his cancer imaging innovations. The company has raised millions in investment and is advancing three product lines that convert tissue samples into digital images in minutes without cutting or destroying them. Instapath is also collaborating with Brown’s team on the MAGIC-SCAN system.

The National Academy of Inventors includes U.S. and international universities and research institutes. The 185 members of the 2025 class of National Academy of Inventors boasts more than 5,300 U.S. patents and includes recipients of the Nobel Prize and other prestigious honors.

ZACHARY PURSELL, PHD, *Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*, HAS BEEN NAMED LEADER OF THE GENES X ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH PROGRAM AT TULANE CANCER CENTER AS WELL AS CO-LEADER OF THE GENES X ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH PROGRAM AT THE LCRC.



The Genes X Environment Research Program explores how genetic factors interact with environmental exposures

— such as infections, chemicals, diet, and access to healthcare — to influence cancer risk, diagnosis, and treatment. Joining LSU Professor of Interdisciplinary Oncology John T. West, PHD, Dr. Pursell will lead the Genes X Environment research direction to unite researchers from diverse disciplines, foster interdisciplinary collaborations, and mentor junior investigators around the program’s core aims. Additionally, he will champion team science at Tulane and across the LCRC partner institutions by facilitating new partnerships for multi-investigator grants and ensuring research findings are translated into clinical trials and strategies that improve patient care.

The Pursell Lab’s research focuses on how genetic mutations occur, contribute to genome instability, and drive tumor development. His team studies mutations in DNA polymerases — enzymes involved in DNA replication and repair — and their role in cancers, particularly in the colon and endometrium.

Pursell earned his BS in biological chemistry from Tulane University and a PHD in molecular and cell biology from the University of California, Berkeley. After completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the NIH’s National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, he joined Tulane’s faculty.

“With Dr. Pursell’s leadership, the Tulane Cancer Center will expand our researchers’ efforts to better understand the intricate relationships between genetics, environmental, and social factors,” said Dr. Grant. “His vision and dedication will help us identify at-risk populations, address cancer disparities in Louisiana and the Gulf South, and translate research into better care. I am confident that Dr. Pursell will lead this program with passion and purpose, ensuring its impact reaches far beyond our walls.”



SUCRE

INSPIRING LOUISIANA'S FUTURE CANCER RESEARCHERS

The LCRC's Summer Undergraduate Cancer Research Experience (SUCRE), fellows spend 8-weeks working in labs, learning about cancer research and shaping their own futures, too.

SUCRE places students with faculty mentors at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center—New Orleans, Tulane School of Medicine, and Xavier University of Louisiana, where they gain hands-on lab experience. Each SUCRE Fellow is assigned a research project aimed at deepening their understanding of cancer—how it starts, spreads, and how to prevent and treat the disease. At the end of the program, the students present their findings in a professional setting, gaining valuable experience in both lab work and scientific communication.

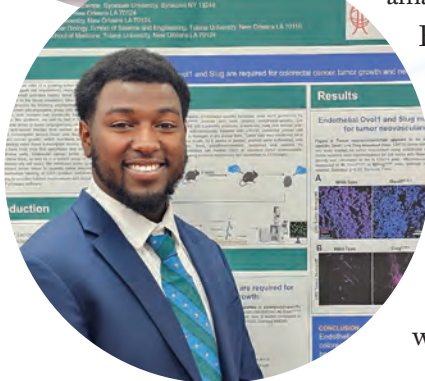
The 2025 SUCRE Cohort included eleven motivated Fellows, each with a unique background and a shared goal: to gain hands-on lab experience that will help shape their futures. While many plan to pursue careers in medicine or biomedical research, such as in cancer biology, population science, or public health, others are using SUCRE as a proving ground—to see if a career in cancer research is truly for them.

James Bailey and Sihyoung Kim, both students at Xavier University, took advantage of the opportunity to explore their future paths. “I see this as a great opportunity to explore my interest in cancer as well as grow my proficiency in the lab setting,” Bailey said. “I want to gain in-depth knowledge of a specific mechanism of cancer treatment.” Kim added, “I hope to learn more about and advance my career in cancer research.” Marie Howe, a senior at LSU, said she is looking forward to gaining hands-on experience in a wet lab and “to see if research is the right direction for me.”

Lockley McElroy, a senior at Tulane University, also works part-time at the LCRC during the school year, which introduced her to the work being done there. “I am well aware of the amazing work that is going on and I am so grateful for the opportunity to be a part of it.”

Elinor Romaguera, a sophomore at LSU, is focused on the big picture. “I want to learn more about how to conduct and communicate research professionally—and as well as related postgraduate opportunities.”

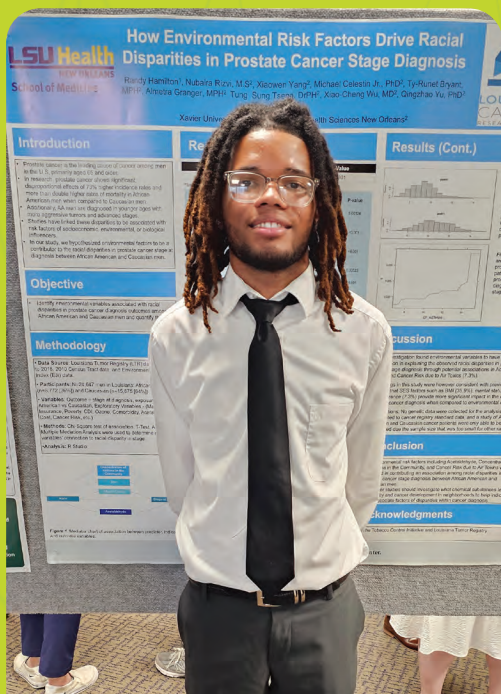
Shawn Sutherland, a senior at Syracuse University, was thrilled to find a prestigious opportunity that was also close to his family who live in New Orleans. “It is super convenient—I can spend time with family and friends while doing something meaningful. I actually heard about SUCRE from a parent in my little brother’s class who works at Tulane’s Cancer Research Center.”



2025 SUCRE Fellows; Lockley McElroy, Elinor Romaguera, Marie Howe, Sihyoung Kim, James Bailey, Shawn Sutherland, Tessa Peterson, Nathan Xiang, Walter Wilber, Cheyenne Roberts, Trinity Tanner, SUCRE Director Charles Wood, PHD

PUBLISHED FELLOW

SUCRE Fellows perform valuable research under the guidance of faculty mentors. 2024 Fellow Randy Hamilton, pictured below, worked with Dr. Qingzhao Yu, professor at the LSU School of Public Health and a faculty member of the LCRC, to study environmental risk factors and racial disparities in prostate cancer diagnoses. He is listed as a co-author on a paper published in *Current Oncology*, submitted by Dr. Yu and a team of researchers from the Louisiana Tumor Registry and the Louisiana Tobacco Control Initiative, an LCRC program. He helped with literature review, descriptive data analysis, and mediation analysis.



HIGH SCHOOL RESEARCHER

LCRC and Xavier University of Louisiana cohosted Lamara Meda, pictured above right, a senior at Haynes Academy for Advanced Studies in New Orleans.

Lamara worked in the lab with Chemistry professors and LCRC faculty members Drs. Maryam Foroozesh and Navneet Goyal, investigating “Synthesis of P450 2A6 Inhibitors.” The purpose was to design molecules that could selectively inhibit the functions of an enzyme, cytochrome P450 2A6, which is involved in the metabolism of nicotine and other environmental toxicants.

TOBACCO FREE LIVING (TFL)



In 2025, the Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living (TFL), a program of the Louisiana Cancer Research Center, made demonstrable progress across Louisiana to reduce tobacco and vaping use and educate about its risks. Through prevention, cessation support, and evidence-based policy support, more Louisianans are breathing easier and moving toward healthier, tobacco and cancer-free futures.

TFL directly engaged more than **16,500 ADULTS AND YOUTH** across Louisiana through tobacco and cancer prevention education and cessation promotion activities. TFL partnered on over **400 COMMUNITY EVENTS** across the state, providing tools and resources that support healthier, tobacco-free lives.



▶ VAPING TOWN HALLS

TFL hosted three successful townhalls in 2025, all with virtual and/or in-person options with over 250 attendees. The town halls created bidirectional awareness building between parents, community members, organizations and officials on the youth vaping epidemic and provided resources for prevention and cessation.



GET REAL! ABOUT VAPING

A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE FOR ADULTS

TFL's Youth Advisory Board (YAB) hosted a virtual conference for adults to examine the vaping epidemic in Louisiana and what youth felt adults needed to know about prevention and support. They shared insights, answered questions and explored the truth about the dangers of nicotine use and addiction, prevention approaches, and next steps for communities, schools, and families.



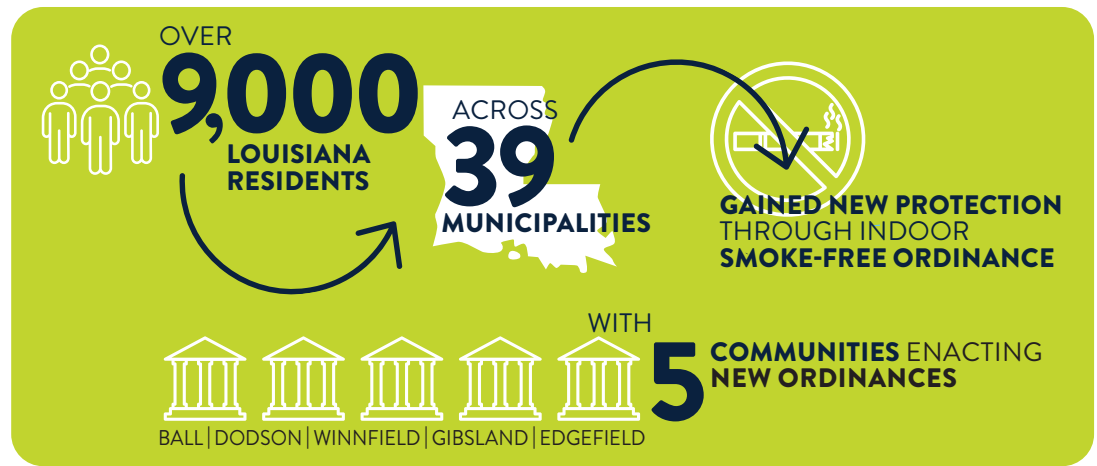
▶ **TFL'S 2025 YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD** engaged 13 new youth across Louisiana to inform and advise on TFL activities that directly impact young people.

SMOKE-FREE MUNICIPAL ORDINANCES

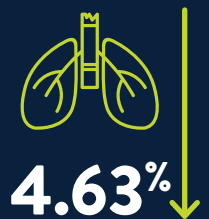
TFL worked with partners and municipalities for healthier air, free of harmful secondhand smoke.

The City of New Orleans celebrated the ten-year anniversary of the SMOKE FREE AIR ACT, which has protected residents, workers, and visitors from the harmful effects of indoor second-hand smoke.

TFL also expanded access to cessation support across Louisiana. More than 4,010 individuals contacted the LOUISIANA QUITLINE seeking cessation assistance. Through coordinated outreach, partner engagement, and improved data monitoring, TFL increased awareness of free, evidence-based cessation services while strengthening systems to track reach, outcomes, and equity gaps.



New research showed that **TFL'S EFFORTS** over the last decade are associated with measurable **HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS**



ANNUAL REDUCTION IN LUNG CANCER RATES



ANNUAL REDUCTION IN TOBACCO-RELATED CANCER RATES IN ORLEANS & OUACHITA PARISHES.

► MEDIA REACH

TFL's evidence-based mass media efforts generated more than **2 MILLION ENGAGEMENTS** across social media, digital platforms, newsletters, YouTube, and earned media—amplifying prevention messages, promoting cessation resources, and ensuring campaigns reached priority populations with age-appropriate, geographically specific, and culturally relevant messaging.

TFL's **CESSATION INFLUENCER CAMPAIGN** leveraged trusted micro-influencers to reach more than **500,000 LOUISIANANS** across diverse priority populations with culturally relevant cessation messages. The campaign used short-form, platform-native content designed for accessibility and resonance. As a result, audiences were more likely to utilize cessation resources and view quitting as achievable and supported within their own communities.

IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH: 2025 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LOUISIANA TOBACCO CONTROL INITIATIVE

The Louisiana Tobacco Control Initiative (TCI), an LSU Health New Orleans (LSU) School of Public Health program funded by the LCRC, works to reduce cancer risk in the state by integrating tobacco cessation interventions into healthcare delivery systems, conducting innovative research on organizational and individual behavior change, and disseminating findings through publications and reports and translating them into clinical practice.

► PRACTICE

TCI assesses its impact on tobacco cessation using health system-, clinic-, and patient-level measures. This year, TCI partnered with 21 health systems/centers in the state and educated close to 1,000 clinicians to screen, treat, and refer tobacco users for cessation services. TCI received 1,926 referrals (1,808 unique tobacco users) for cessation treatment. Among the unique referrals, 867 tobacco users indicated a readiness to quit. TCI Tobacco Treatment Specialists (TTS) scheduled 617 of those ready to quit for individual behavioral counseling, provided 542 individual counseling sessions to 261 unique tobacco users, and referred 177 to the Louisiana Quit Line for additional cessation services.

927

CLINICIANS EDUCATED
TO SCREEN AND TREAT
TOBACCO USE



1,926

REFERRALS RECEIVED
FOR TCI COUNSELING
FROM PARTNER SITES



542

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING SESSIONS
FACILITATED BY TCI SPECIALISTS



261

UNIQUE TOBACCO
USERS COUNSELED

176

UNIQUE TOBACCO
USERS REFERRED TO
THE STATE QUITLINE



TCI conducted community outreach and engagement activities for nationally recognized health observances in 2025, including World Cancer Day, Men's Health Week, No Menthol Sunday, Lung Cancer Awareness Day, and Great American Smokeout (GASO) Day. Outreach and engagement activities included radio and TV interviews, social media posts, and educational presentations via webinars and at community health fairs. Dr. Michael Celestin also gave four oral presentations on tobacco use and lung cancer, including for the Tulane University Peer Health Educator group, the LCRC Promising Practice's Conference, the South-Central AIDS Education and Training Center Program, and the Xavier University of Louisiana Research Centers in Minority Institutions Center for Cancer Research.

Dr. Michael Celestin travels the state educating Louisiana's residents on the connection between tobacco use and lung cancer and ways to stop smoking.





Cessation education material presented to Republican Baptist Church Congregants in Shreveport, LA, for No Menthol Sunday.

In recognition of No Menthol Sunday, Lung Cancer Screening Day, and Great American Smokeout Day, TCI TTS hosted educational events in cities across the state, including Bernice, West Monroe, Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Bogalusa, Shreveport, and Independence, LA. Activities included exhibiting the AstraZeneca Lung Xperience in collaboration with a health partner's cancer center, displaying tobacco modules and educational material explaining the harmful chemicals found in combustible and electronic cigarettes, and presenting visual displays of tobacco-related health outcomes at churches. Dr. Celestin served as an Ambassador for the American Cancer Society's Men Wear Pink Campaign to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer, was selected by the Council for Tobacco Treatment Training Programs to serve as a member at large on its board of directors, and assumed co-leadership of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco Treatment Research Network Communication Subcommittee.

► SCHOLARSHIP

TCI investigators submitted four non-funded applications for grant funding, including one to the National Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities, two to the National Cancer Institute, and one to the LSU Health Science Center-Wide Intramural Research Program (WIRP), with plans to resubmit. TCI investigators published study findings in two peer-reviewed journals, the Journal of the National Medical Association and Current Oncology and published a non-peer-reviewed article for the Society of Behavioral Medicine's (SBM) website. TCI investigators mentored a postdoctoral fellow, two LSU doctoral students, and three undergraduate students from LSU, Tulane, and Xavier, in the conduct of research. Postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Julie Martin, was one of 20 trainees selected nationally for the SBM's Peer Reviewer Academy – a one-year training experience to learn peer review skills followed by placement on the editorial board for one of the SBM Journals. Trainees presented their research via scientific posters at several conferences and symposiums, including the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco Annual Meeting.

Xavier Undergraduate Research Intern Kaylie Nguyen presenting her study findings at the LSU High School and Undergraduate Summer Research Program Symposium.



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MANUSCRIPTS PUBLISHED

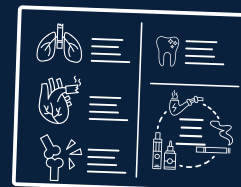


6

MENTORED TRAINEES

8

SCIENTIFIC POSTERS
PRESENTED





CCOLQ BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICERS, LEFT TO RIGHT: Tracy Tinguee, Board Member; Edith Gee Jones, VP, CCOLQ; Nedra Jasper Alcorn, Board Member; LaKenya Collins, Treasurer; Beverly Joy Victorienne, Board Member; Kathleen McKinney Franks, Board Member; Linda Barry Sevalia, President; Taylor Collins, Member, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; Sven Davisson, LCRC CAO; Deborah Reeder, LCRC CFO; Seanne Falconer, Executive Director, Tulane Cancer Center; Ryan Graffagnini, LCRC Controller.



SUPPORTING CANCER RESEARCH IN LOUISIANA

EVERYONE IS AFFECTED BY CANCER EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, SO WHEN AN ORGANIZATION EMBRACES CANCER RESEARCH AS A FUNDRAISING GOAL, ITS MEMBERS RALLY IN SUPPORT.

It is a simple and meaningful way to unite their membership around a cause that touches so many lives.

Organizations are expanding their commitment to the Louisiana Cancer Research Center's (LCRC) mission by undertaking fundraising drives that make it easy for members to donate. It offers a cause they believe in, raises the organization's visibility, and sets a standard of civic-mindedness for future generations.

For the past several years, The Crescent City OLQ Charitable Organization (CCOLQ), the non-profit foundation of the Omicron Lambda Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., has raised thousands of dollars in support of the LCRC through member events and individual contributions.

CCOLQ's October 2025 fundraiser, "On the Heels of Hope: Strike Out Cancer Bowling Fundraiser," raised \$10,000 for the Louisiana Cancer Research Center.

"Our partnership with the Louisiana Cancer Research Center has allowed us to extend our impact in addressing critical health issues. Cancer, in particular, has touched the lives of us all, and through our continued support, we hope to bring awareness, resources, and hope to those affected by this disease."

— LINDA B. SEVALIA, PRESIDENT,
CRESCENT CITY OLQ CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

LCRC Chief Administrative Officer Sven Davisson said that the funds will be utilized by the Center's Office of Community

Engagement to support cancer prevention events throughout Louisiana. "The Louisiana Cancer Research Center's 300+ member scientists are doing vital work at institutions across the state to advance the fight against cancer, while our many community partners are in the field, educating Louisianans about cancer screenings, clinical trials, and resources by presenting town halls, webinars, and informational events. The CCOLQ's donation will go toward supporting these worthy efforts to raise individual awareness of cancer risk," Davisson said.

ENGAGING YOUNG DONORS

CCOLQ's efforts demonstrate the power of collective giving and set a strong example for the organization's younger members. For example, Taylor Collins, a first-year MD MPH candidate at LSU Health Sciences Center, and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA) works at the LCRC building as a Clinical Trials Coordinator for the LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center. She supports the TMIST Study (EA1151) that aims to update the standard of care for breast cancer mammography screening to ensure all women have access to effective breast cancer prevention. In her role, Taylor obtains consent from women who enroll in the study, conveys the importance of early detection, and collects data from each of their mammogram visits.

Taylor's dedication to community service was influenced by her mother, LaKenya Collins, who is also a member of AKA and treasurer for CCOLQ. "Growing up, I looked up to my mother and the women in her circle as inspirations and my biggest role models. A lot of those women happened to be in AKA and shared common values in professional success through education, civic responsibility, volunteerism, and fostering meaningful relationships to build strength in their community," Taylor said.



Taylor Collins with her mother, LaKenya Collins

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

June 30, 2025 (with comparative financial information as of June 30, 2024)

ASSETS

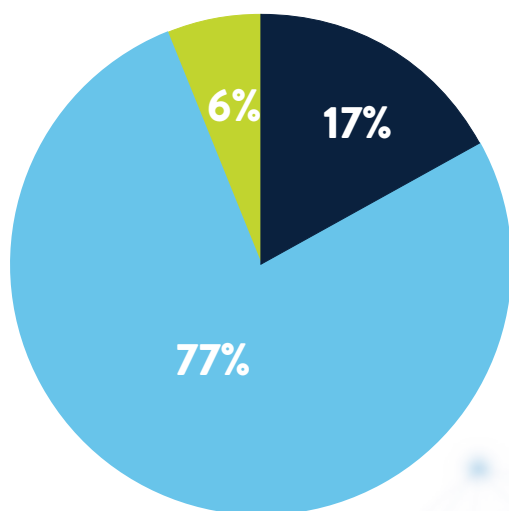
	2025	2024
Cash & Cash Equivalents	41,581,940	37,163,707
Investments	20,118,849	19,112,593
Receivables - Grants	3,554,311	2,178,637
Receivables - Other	23,828	3,202,741
Property and Equipment	73,095,400	75,629,482
Prepaid Expenses	147,952	185,922
Deposits	52,400	52,400
Right of use asset - operating	3,340,750	3,419,669
TOTAL ASSETS	141,915,430	140,945,151

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES	2025	2024
Accounts Payable	4,000,296	4,729,770
Accrued Liabilities	444,393	223,439
Lease Liability - operating	3,340,750	3,419,669
TOTAL LIABILITIES	7,785,439	8,372,878
NET ASSETS	2025	2024
Without Donor Restrictions	4,531,178	4,465,307
With Donor Restrictions	129,598,813	128,106,966
TOTAL NET ASSETS	134,129,991	132,572,273
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	141,915,430	140,945,151

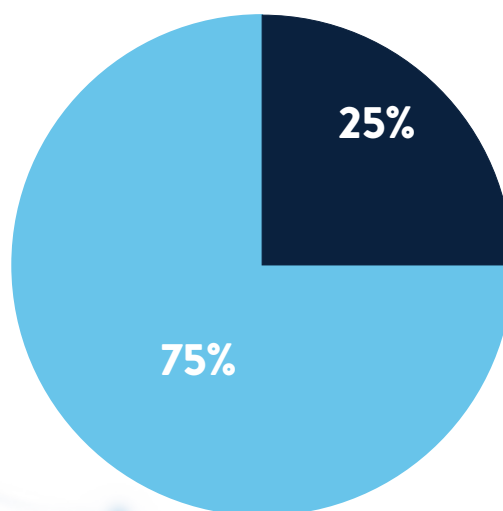
OPERATING EXPENSES 2024

- PROGRAM EXPENSES
- MANAGEMENT & GENERAL
- FACILITIES



FUNDING SOURCES 2024

- GRANTS - OPERATING
- LEASE, INVESTMENT, FUNDRAISING & OTHER INCOME



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Year ended June 30, 2024 (with summarized financial information for the year ended June 30, 2023)

REVENUES

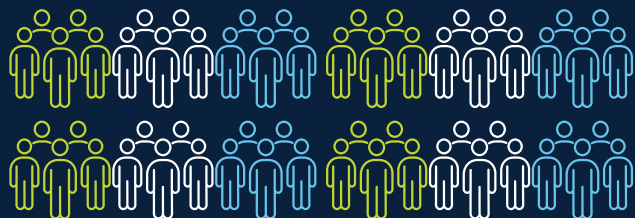
			2025	2024
	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL	TOTAL
Grants		18,829,072	18,829,072	23,448,814
Lease Income	4,577,099		4,577,099	4,498,099
Investment Income	47,417	1,464,993	1,512,410	1,260,361
Other	132,939		132,939	116,299
Fundraising & Contributions	26,466		26,466	21,724
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	18,802,218	(18,802,218)	-	-
TOTAL REVENUES	23,586,669	1,491,847	25,078,516	29,345,297

EXPENSES

Research Expenses	10,982,751		10,982,751	7,874,560
Cessation/TFL Expenses	3,548,001		3,548,001	3,612,492
Salaries and Related Benefits	1,120,115		1,120,115	1,159,426
Operating Services	4,165,963		4,165,963	4,113,108
Supplies	48,608		48,608	68,618
Professional Services	385,570		385,570	440,559
Travel & Meeting Expenses	21,783		21,783	27,090
Depreciation	3,189,699		3,189,699	3,282,421
Other	58,308		58,308	52,992
TOTAL EXPENSES	23,520,798		23,520,798	20,631,266
INCREASE(DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS	65,871	1,491,847	1,557,718	8,714,031
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	4,465,307	128,106,966	123,858,242	123,858,242
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	4,531,178	129,598,813	134,129,991	132,572,273

BY THE NUMBERS

380 MEMBERS
STATE-WIDE



\$48.8

MILLION in NIH
CANCER-RELATED
FUNDING



PUBLICATIONS

311

\$14.7

MILLION in
NCI FUNDING



LCRC FACULTY AWARDED HIGHLY COMPETITIVE R01 GRANTS

Researchers were awarded five new R01 equivalent grants in 2025, the most competitive of scientific research awards. The R01 is NIH's most commonly used grant program for independent research projects and is highly competitive.

The Role of Cell-Specific PD-L1 in cardiac pathophysiology post Ischemic Injury and Cancer
—TOUSIF SULTAN, LSU Health Sciences Shreveport

Boosting Oncolytic HSV Immunotherapy by Enabling Necroptosis
—HONGYAN GUO, LSU Health Sciences Shreveport

Differential activation of the triacylglycerol pathway in lipofibroblasts induces neurogenesis associated with prostate cancer progression
—OMAR FRANCO CORONEL, LSU Health Sciences Shreveport

RNA-binding as a new paradigm for androgen receptor-mediated prostate cancer therapeutic resistance
—YAN DONG, Tulane

Investigating the Immunosuppressive Function of lncRNA CRNDE in Hepatic Tumorigenesis
—JINQIANG D. ZHANG, Tulane

Evaluation of a triple negative matrix signature in tumor progression and resistance
—ELIZABETH MARTIN, Tulane

TET1 and sex differences in alcohol associated liver tumorigenesis
—CHIUNG-KUEI HUANG, Tulane

