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**Twenty-Five College Students Participate in
Regenerative Medicine Summer Research Program
Pittsburgh Tissue Engineering Initiative Marks 13th Year of Summer Internship**

PITTSBURGH, June 2, 2009 –Twenty-five undergraduate students from colleges and universities, primarily across southwestern Pennsylvania and the Pittsburgh region, have been selected to participate in the 13th Annual Summer Internship Program (SIP) of the Pittsburgh Tissue Engineering Initiative (PTEI). The goal of the program is to expose greatly increased numbers of underserved students to growing opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematic (STEM) related fields across the Pittsburgh region within the highly interdisciplinary field of tissue engineering and regenerative medicine (TERM). The program exposes 2- year and 4-year institute undergraduate students to biomedical research within the cutting-edge field of TERM. Undergraduate students are provided real world experience as they learn more about the wonders and, ultimately, applications of TERM as they work alongside our region's top-notch TERM researchers and clinicians.

The SIP showcases the many growing opportunities in TERM and provides 10-week, paid internships for undergraduate college students pursuing careers in STEM. Each student is matched with an established researcher/clinician mentor who supervises his or her work. Students perform their own research and data analysis, and present their findings at a formal scientific poster session, which is held at the end of the program on August 7, 2009 at the Sheraton, Station Square, Pittsburgh.

Regional sponsors, including the Fisher Fund of the Pittsburgh Foundation, Highmark Blue Cross and Blue Cross Blue Shield, UPMC Health Plan, and the Eden Hall Foundation, focus on supporting the participation of underserved undergraduate students with permanent homes in southwestern Pennsylvania. PTEI is highly committed to providing our region's youth to the

broad range of world-class research, educational, and workforce resources in their own backyard.

A special National Science Foundation-supported component focuses on supporting the participation of under-represented minority students and students from primarily non-research academic institutes. These students come to us from a national applicant pool and contribute to our region's need to further grow our pool of talented youth and support our growing life sciences industry sector. Combined, this strategy enables PTEI to prevent regional *brain drain* while enabling regional *brain gain*. Lastly, an additional component pairs interns with our Department of Defense collaborative researchers, who focus on utilizing TERM research to address significant problems related to combat casualty care and wound healing. Sponsoring laboratories for all participants offer individualized projects for the interns, all of whom are presenting the results of their research at a final scientific poster session.

The longitudinal outcomes from this program are impressive. Since it was initiated in 1997, 268 students, including the 2009 group, have taken part in the SIP. The SIP has been enormously successful in encouraging participants to pursue postgraduate education. Of participants who have completed their undergraduate studies, 43% are now attending medical school, 25% are attending graduate school, and 10% are pursuing dual degrees. Of these, 38% are attending medical and/or graduate school in the Pittsburgh and southwestern Pennsylvania region.

“The Summer Internship Program is PTEI’s oldest and most successful of its educational programs, and one of my personal favorites,” said Joan Schanck, PTEI Director of Education and Workforce Development. “It provides the priceless opportunity for young people to explore careers as basic scientists and clinicians within the field of tissue engineering and the broader field of regenerative medicine, as well as work alongside world-renown, cutting-edge researchers.”

PTEI is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of individuals by establishing the region as an internationally recognized center of excellence in research, education, and commercial development for the advancement of tissue-related medical therapies. PTEI’s educational programs span K-12 through postdoctoral training. For more information, visit the PTEI web site at www.ptei.org.