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CONTACT: LaShon Jackson
(412) 235-5230
ljackson@ptei.org

**Twenty-four College Students Participate in
Regenerative Medicine Summer Research Program
Pittsburgh Tissue Engineering Initiative Marks 12th Year of Summer Internship**

PITTSBURGH, August 8, 2008 –Twenty-four undergraduate students from colleges and universities, primarily across southwestern Pennsylvania and the Pittsburgh region, have taken part in the 12th Annual Summer Internship Program (SIP) of the Pittsburgh Tissue Engineering Initiative (PTEI). The goal of the program is to expose greatly increased numbers of students to growing opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematic (STEM) related fields across the Pittsburgh region with the highly interdisciplinary field of tissue engineering as focus. The program exposes 2-year and 4-year institute undergraduate students to the cutting-edge field of tissue engineering and regenerative medicine (TERM) and provides real world experience as they learn more about the wonders and, ultimately, applications of TERM as they work alongside our region's top-notch TE researchers and clinicians.

The SIP showcases 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. Each student performs their own research and data analysis, and presents their findings at a formal scientific poster session, which is being held at the end of the program, on August 8, 2008 at the Sheraton, Station Square.

Regional sponsors, including the Fisher Fund of the Pittsburgh Foundation, Highmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield, UPMC Health Plan and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, focus on supporting the participation of undergraduate students with permanent homes in southwestern Pennsylvania. PTEI is highly committed to presenting to our region's youth the broad range of world-class research, educational and workforce resources in their own backyard.

A special NSF-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.

Since it was initiated in 1997, 222 students, including the 2008 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 41% are now attending medical school; 25% are attending graduate school and 10% are pursuing dual degrees. Of these, 36% 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 educational program, and my favorite,” said Joan Schanck, PTEI Director of Education. “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.