Sac State unveils thoroughly renovated molecular biology lab

Sacramento State has unveiled its cutting-edge molecular biology lab known as CIMERA, or Center for Interdisciplinary Molecular Biology Education, Research and Advancement.

The newly renovated basement laboratory, which was 10 years in the making, strengthens Sacramento State’s leadership in education for the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields.

“This is not just for us. It’s really for generations to come, and that’s what we’re celebrating here today,” said keynote speaker U.S. Rep. Doris Matsui, D-Sacramento, who is a member of the Congressional STEM Education caucus. The unveiling event was held Monday in Sacramento State’s Sequoia Hall.

“The unveiling of this innovative molecular biology lab represents an investment in science and higher education and in our nation’s future,” she said. “Sacramento State is an institution that is known not only throughout the state but throughout the country. It’s a place where students go to further their education but also a place where cutting-edge research is leading to the discoveries of tomorrow. Study after study shows that our nation has a gap in the STEM professions. Here at Sac State, you are turning out leaders in these fields.”

University President Alexander Gonzalez said that CIMERA “gives our University a state-of-the-art facility that provides hands-on learning experiences to prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow. In fact, hundreds of our students have already begun to use the lab for their classes and independent research. The lab also advances Sacramento State’s strength in applied research for faculty and students.”

Visitors to the molecular biology lab talked at the unveiling with student researchers about their work, including prototyping an adipose tissue preconditioning device for plastic surgery application. One student explained the effects of ginkgo seeds, yunnan baiyao and dragon’s blood on breast cancer cells. Another talked about three preservation methods for the recovery of DNA from wet cigarette butts.
Sac State professors Tom Savage, Tom Peavy and Tom Landerholm received more than $1 million in funding to complete the CIMERA lab.

Savage and Peavy were awarded $755,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds through the National Science Foundation to expand and modernize the lab, which supports the research programs of 16 Sac State professors. The U.S. Department of Education awarded Landerholm $350,000 to buy and upgrade advanced cell-analysis equipment housed in the lab. In addition, the three Sac State professors secured a donation of more than $1 million in equipment and supplies from Bayer HealthCare to be used for student research.

“When I worked in the biotechnology industry and was involved in screening résumés to hire young scientists for our laboratory,” Savage told the crowd gathered for the CIMERA lab’s unveiling, “the first criterion we used for selection was whether the applicants had independent research experience outside the classroom.

“This history impressed upon me the need for our educational programs to provide an environment where students can get that research experience. Doing that requires our faculty to have strong research programs that engage students in answering meaningful scientific problems. What I am excited about with this new facility is that it provides our faculty and students with a state-of-the-art facility and equipment to enable the research that provides the students with the hands-on learning experiences they need to further their scientific careers.”

To view photos from the CIMERA lab unveiling, visit our Facebook page. For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Office of Public Affairs at (916) 278-6156.

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