

NC State and UC Davis join NIEHS environmental health sciences research centers

By Kelly Lenox

New research centers at North Carolina State University (NC State) and the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) join more than 20 [NIEHS-funded Environmental Health Sciences \(EHS\) Core Centers](#) around the country working at the cutting edge of environmental health research, and fostering community engagement. NIEHS issued the five-year awards April 29 and May 5, respectively.

“Our EHS Core Centers program is a network of leaders in environmental health sciences,” said Claudia Thompson, Ph.D., head of the NIEHS Population Health Branch and program lead. “They bring together scientists from multiple disciplines to pursue promising research opportunities, and to develop the next generation of EHS researchers. We are very excited to have NC State and UC Davis join the network.”

North Carolina collaboration

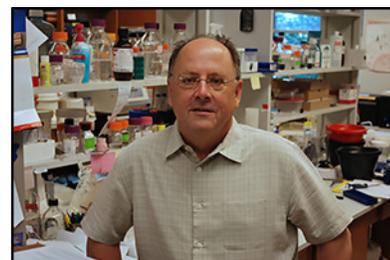
At NC State, scientists at the [Center for Human Health and the Environment](#) will collaborate with researchers at the East Carolina University Brody School of Medicine, North Carolina Central University, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, and Research Triangle Institute NIH Eastern Regional Comprehensive Metabolomics Resource Core. Leveraging the technical expertise of CHHE and its partners, the center will focus on how environmental stressors interact with biomolecular signaling pathways, the genome, and the epigenome.

“CHHE will build on NC State’s unique research and community outreach strengths to make significant contributions to understand and prevent adverse impacts of environmental factors on human health,” said Robert Smart, Ph.D., NC State cancer researcher and CHHE director.

Multidisciplinary team and California community partnerships

The new center at UC Davis comprises a team of scientists from 19 departments, across four schools and colleges. “The NIEHS core center award is an exciting development that will enable our multidisciplinary team of environmental health scientists at UC Davis to expand our scope of research on risks to respiratory, brain, immune, endocrine, and metabolic functions,” said [Irva Hertz-Picciotto, Ph.D.](#), director of the center.

Exposures of interest include particles and volatile organic compounds in ambient air, pollutants in drinking water and food, and household or personal care products. Hertz-Picciotto expressed excitement about the upcoming work the center will do, especially in California’s Central Valley. “Most significantly, this new center will address serious health disparities and seek environmental justice with respect to chemical pollutants that abound in the California Central Valley,” she said, “by partnering with communities in the San Joaquin Valley and translating scientific research findings into public health measures that reduce pollutant levels and improve the health and quality of life for all residents.”



In addition to leading CHHE, Smart serves as director of graduate programs for the NC State Department of Environmental and Molecular Toxicology and heads the NIEHS training program Molecular Pathways to Pathogenesis in Toxicology. (Photo courtesy of Jonathan Hall)



Hertz-Picciotto, a well-known environmental epidemiologist, was one of the panelists in the NIEHS virtual community forum on autism in April 2014 (see [story](#)). (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

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