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Science Center program awards \$600K to four university researchers



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A potential drug therapy for Lou Gehrig's disease and a new treatment for pancreatic cancer were among the four promising technologies picked to receive a total of \$600,000 in funding support through the **University City Science Center's** QED Proof-of-Concept Program.

The grants went to life science and health IT researchers from Drexel, Temple, and Rutgers universities.

The four projects were selected from among 65 submissions encompassing 14 universities in the Philadelphia region. For each project, half of the awarded funding is provided by the Science Center. **Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation** is, for the first time, funding a portion of the awards for the projects at colleges in Philadelphia, through Startup PHL. The researcher's university provides the remaining balance for the other half.

[Stephen S. Tang](#), president and CEO of the Science Center, said participants also receive business advice and guidance to exit, which, he said, "can speed the progress of commercialization and help researchers succeed, or fail, faster."

The four researchers to receive funding were:

- Dr. [Benjamin Blass](#) of **Temple University**, who leads a program that is developing a potential drug therapy for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis [also known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease], \$200,000.
- Dr. [Joseph Picone](#) of Temple University, who is working on EEG reporting software that automatically analyzes readings and guides diagnosis, \$100,000.

- Dr. [Christof Daetwyler](#) of **Drexel University College of Medicine**, who is developing an online system to improve the communication skills of health-care professionals, \$100,000.
- Dr. [Samuel Gunderson](#) of **Rutgers University**, who is validating a new therapeutic compound for pancreatic cancer, \$200,000.

Since the program's inception in 2009, QED has awarded \$3.6 million to 20 projects. Five projects have progressed to the point where the relevant technologies have been licensed. Those five projects have attracted more than \$9 million in follow-on funding, according to the Science Center.

Beat: Health Care, Biotech/Pharmaceutical, Sports