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FSU NEWS

FSU gets state approval for \$2.2M drug study despite China link



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Key Points

- Florida State University received state approval to join a drug discovery study led by a Denmark-based consortium.
- Concerns were raised due to a Chinese institution's involvement, which triggers state legislation about foreign countries of concern.
- FSU President Richard McCullough assured the board that no resources or confidential information will be shared with partners.

Florida State University has received a stamp of approval from the state's higher education board to participate in what's expected to be a **groundbreaking drug discovery study** through a Denmark-based research consortium.

While the **Florida Board of Governors'** unanimous vote during a March 2 virtual meeting gave FSU the go ahead, it came in spite of a member of the proposed study being based in China – which triggers state legislation about foreign countries of concern.

But FSU President **Richard McCullough** assured the board that the China-based institution's participation what not pose as a threat.

“Florida State University has unique talent to take on this project,” McCullough told the board during the Zoom meeting as he presented a summary of the university’s request. The proposal was approved without any discussion from the board’s members, or from the public.

“The resources that will be used will not be shared under the agreement and are not accessible to any of our partners – including foreign individuals,” McCullough added.

The consortium is sponsored by the [Novo Nordisk Foundation](#), which is a large, multinational pharmaceutical company headquartered in Denmark. The research project would include FSU’s participation in a study called the Gram-Negative Antibiotic Discovery Innovator Initiative (Gr-ADI), and it would pay FSU \$2.2 million over three years in exchange for its participation.

Other American universities that were selected include the University of Wisconsin, the University of Washington and Harvard University. Among international institutions participating in the project are the University of Oxford and Cambridge University.

More: [FSU pursues \\$2.2M research bid; Chinese partner triggers state review](#)

Through the project, an FSU research investigator will work on discovering new antibiotic measures that can fight a multi-drug-resistant bacteria called *Klebsiella Pneumoniae*, which is commonly known for causing serious health issues like pneumonia and bloodstream infections. But in total, five faculty members, four graduate students and one post-doctoral associate from FSU will participate in the study.

While [Beijing Huayi Health and Drug Research Institute](#) – a China-based company – was selected among 22 institutions that make up the consortium, FSU’s Vice President of Research Stacey Patterson explained to the university’s Board of Trustees in January that a research security screening was completed and did not flag concerns about any of the participating entities.

“I think the most important thing is that Florida State University will be in total control, will not have to share any information, and will maintain all ownership of the intellectual property from the project,” McCullough told the governing board during the March 2 meeting. “No confidential information or materials would be required to be shared.”

FSU’s participation in the drug discovery study will begin this month, with the three-year agreement ending in March 2029.

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