



CANCER PREVENTION & RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

# Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee Annual Report 2023

Sarah Williams-Blangero, Ph.D., Chair  
Min Kang, Pharm.D., Co-Chair



# Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee

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The Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee advises the Oversight Committee and staff on universities' special needs and challenges in ***developing cancer research capacity*** in locations far away from the cancer research centers in the major metropolitan areas. The members represent universities that are located 100 miles or more from a National Cancer Institute Designated Center in Houston, Dallas, or San Antonio.



# Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee

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Committee was formed in the summer of 2021, and over the past year has met five times to develop recommendations

Meeting Dates:
✓ June 3, 2022
✓ August 5, 2022
✓ October 7, 2022
✓ January 6, 2023
✓ April 14, 2023



# Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee

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Member	University
Joseph Heppert, Ph.D.	Texas Tech University
Min Kang, Pharm.D.	Texas Tech University Health Science Center
Robert Kirken, Ph.D.	The University of Texas El Paso
Raj Lakshmanaswamy, Ph.D.	Texas Tech University Health Science Center, El Paso
Ken Ramos, M.D., Ph.D.	Texas A&M University
Daniel Romo, Ph.D.	Baylor University
Sarah Williams-Blangero, Ph.D.	The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley



# Texas Regional Excellence in Cancer Award

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- Funding mechanism targeted to institutions located 100 miles or more from a National Cancer Institute Designated Center.
- In February 2023, the second set of TREC Awards were made



# Texas Regional Excellence in Cancer Award

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- Texas A&M University System Health Science Center. *Gene-Environment-Lifestyle Interactions in Cancer*. Ken Ramos, P.I.
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center at El Paso. *Impacting Cancer Outcomes in Hispanics*. Raj Lakshmanaswamy, P.I.
- University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. *South Texas Center of Excellence in Cancer Research*. Subhash Chauhan, P.I.



# TREC-ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

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Impacting cancer in Texas by:

- Addressing cancer health disparities.
- Conducting research with underserved populations.
- Increasing the scientific workforce devoted to cancer research.



# TREC-Eligible Institutions

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- Resource-limited institutions where CPRIT funding will have a transformational rather than incremental impact on cancer research programs.
- Five TRECs awarded to date:
  - Texas Tech University Health Science Center
  - University of Texas El Paso
  - Texas A&M University System Health Science Center
  - Texas Tech University Health Science Center El Paso
  - University of Texas Rio Grande Valley





# Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee

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- The Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee **advises the Oversight Committee and staff on universities' special needs and challenges in developing cancer research capacity** in locations far away from the cancer research centers in the major metropolitan areas.



# Sustainability of TREC Programs

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- Ensuring the sustainability
  - TREC Awards can be renewed once
  - TREC Award-supported resources can be leveraged to generate additional major funding from NIH and other biomedical research funding agencies.
  - Additional TREC-related funding programs at CPRIT will foster career development and support acquisition of major instrumentation that can be leveraged for additional funding.



# TREC: Pilot Study Award

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- Pilot Study funding for high risk/high reward projects is limited at TREC-eligible institutions.
- Pilot Study funding can be used to generate preliminary data or develop technical approaches that will support applications for major research funding.
- GDAC anticipates that long-term, the return on Pilot Study Awards will be high.



# TREC: Pilot Study Award Program

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- TREC: Pilot Study Award Program was launched this year, with applications due on April 18, 2023.
- Award provides up to \$200,000 in funding over a period of two years to explore feasibility of cancer research projects.
- Review of applications started in June, 2023.
- First awards will be made in August, 2023.



# TREC: Institutional Postdoctoral Training Award

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- Postdoctoral Training is another area where CPRIT can have a transformational impact at TREC-eligible institutions.
- Postdoctoral scientists contribute critical expertise and novel ideas to cancer research programs.
- Outstanding postdoctoral scientists may be retained as faculty, enhancing the workforce at TREC-eligible institutions.



# TREC: Institutional Postdoctoral Training Award

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- The TREC: Institutional Postdoctoral Training Award was made available for the first time this year, with applications due in April.
- These training grants will provide \$850,000 over a period of 3 years to support training and research by outstanding postdoctoral scientists.
- Review of applications began in June.
- First awards will be made in August, 2023.



# TREC: Major Instrumentation Award

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- Major instrumentation to enhance research capacity is a common need at TREC-eligible institutions.
- The TREC: Major Instrumentation Award was launched this year.
- The Award provides up to \$1 million over 2 years to support the purchase of major equipment that will support multiple cancer investigators.



# TREC Funding Mechanisms

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- CPRIT now has four programs supporting the transformation of cancer research at TREC-eligible institutions.
- Additional programs recommended by the GDAC include
  - TREC Annual Meeting Award
  - TREC Clinical Trial Infrastructure Award
  - TREC Individual Meeting Award





# CPRIT Investment in TREC Eligible Institutions

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- This year CPRIT has made a major investment in TREC-eligible institutions through three new TREC Awards and the launch of three new funding mechanisms.
- These programs support both junior and senior investigators whose research is focused on cancer.
- Maintaining a portfolio of funding mechanisms that are targeted to TREC-eligible institutions will increase the competitiveness of TREC-eligible institutions for other funding agencies, while simultaneously advancing cancer research.



# CPRIT Investment in TREC Eligible Institutions

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- A key goal of the GDAC for this year was to leverage CPRIT investment across the different TREC-eligible institutions by fostering collaborations and promoting resources and opportunities available at each of the institutions.
- GDAC will initiate a biannual virtual retreat to bring TREC investigators from across the five funded TRECs together to discuss opportunities for collaboration, resources available to support collaborative research, and priorities for action by the GDAC.



# Goals for 2023 - 2024

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- Promote the exciting cancer research done at TREC-eligible by sharing press releases and announcements with CPRIT staff.
- Develop web page dedicated to TRECs within university websites.
- Launch the biannual *TREC Virtual Retreat* to foster collaboration and sharing of resources.



# Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee



# Goals for 2022-2023

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- Identifying resources and opportunities at TREC-Eligible institutions
- Fostering collaborations between TREC-Eligible Institutions
- Tracking progress/impact of TRECs; emphasis on underserved populations
- Meeting of investigators from TREC-Eligible institutions together with investigators from currently TREC-funded institutions.

