SPORE studies will benefit the large population of individuals that are affected by GI cancers. They will also work with high risk groups that may not be screened for colon cancers, to develop easy-to-access screening tests.

CLEVELAND — The National Cancer Institute has awarded $11.3 million to Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine to establish a center of excellence for research on gastrointestinal cancers. The funding designates the university as a Specialized Program of

Research Excellence (SPORE) in Gastrointestinal (GI) Cancers – recognition extended to just one institution this year. University Hospitals Case Medical Center is the primary affiliate of Case Western Reserve and is collaborating with the School of Medicine on a portion of the comprehensive program.

Spearheading the congressional support for the grant was U.S. Representative Marcia L. Fudge (OH-11).

At a press conference this week Case Western Reserve President Barbara R. Snyder said, "This grant reflects the culmination of decades of remarkable research efforts that have advanced our understanding of some of the most devastating and challenging forms of cancer, We are proud of that progress and profoundly hopeful for future breakthroughs."

In recognizing Congresswoman Fudge's contribution she stated, "I want to take this opportunity to let every one here know that she (Congresswoman Fudge) has been an extraordinary advocate for Cleveland, this Congressional district and our university... It is one thing to appreciate higher education, another to affect positive change. Congresswoman Fudge is the whole package."

This award recognizes extraordinary achievements and potential of the School of Medicine's programs in gastrointestinal malignancies. Case Western Reserve will join an elite group of six other institutions nationwide that hold a SPORE in gastrointestinal cancers. Others include Harvard and Johns Hopkins University. The new funding will be used to build on Case Western Reserve researchers' existing discoveries and push them forward to provide more effective modes of detection, treatment and prevention for patients.

The Case Western Reserve SPORE will focus on translational research aimed at reducing the incidence and deaths from colon cancers and from cancers of the esophagus The SPORE will also develop new approaches for treatment and prevention of adenomatous colon polyps that can develop into colon cancers, and for Barrett's esophagus, that can develop into esophageal

cancer. Colon cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in the United States, and cancers of the esophagus are (along with melanomas) the most rapidly increasing cause of cancer deaths in the United States.

“We believe passionately in the importance of bench-to-bedside research – that is, to ensure discoveries made in laboratories effectively reach the patients who need them most,” said Pamela B. Davis, MD, PhD, Dean of the School of Medicine and Vice President for Medical Affairs, Case Western Reserve University. “This award aligns directly with that approach, and the work it funds ultimately will change lives.”

SPORE studies will benefit the large population of individuals that are affected by GI cancers. They will also work with high risk groups that may not be screened for colon cancers, to develop easy-to-access screening tests. This will include African-Americans, a population highly vulnerable to colon cancer. Since early detection saves lives, this advance will have significant impact on individuals most at risk.

The SPORE will be directed by Dr. Sanford Markowitz, the Dr. Sanford Markowitz/Frances Wragg Ingalls Professor of Cancer Genetics at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and a medical oncologist at University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center. The SPORE is co-directed by Dr. Nathan Berger, the Hanna-Payne Professor of Experimental Medicine at Case Western Reserve School of Medicine, and a hematologist-oncologist at the Seidman Cancer Center. Drs. Markowitz and Berger will lead the SPORE team of 15 doctors and scientists, 11 from the School of Medicine, and its principal affiliate, University Hospitals Case Medical Center, and three from Cleveland Clinic. The Cleveland team is also joined by Dr. James K. V. Willson, Director of Simmons Cancer Center at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, and by Dr. Willson’s Dallas-based team of investigators.

“I am honored to lead the outstanding team of physicians and scientists who have joined in the

SPORE," said Dr. Markowitz. "Our SPORE trials will be conducted here in Cleveland, and members of our community will be among the first to be able to benefit from the work."

"As the first SPORE to be awarded to the institution, this is a significant advance," said Dr. Stan Gerson, Asa and Patricia Shiverick- Jane Shiverick (Tripp) Professor of Hematological Oncology and director of the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Seidman Cancer Center at University Hospitals Case Medical Center. "The grant validates our priority to develop strong, coordinated and integrated cross-disciplinary teams to investigate and treat complex cancers. This reflects our approach to all of the major cancers."