Meharry-Vanderbilt Alliance Awards Grants to Support Community Engagement in Celebration of Its 15-year Anniversary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nashville, TN (June 5, 2014) – In celebration of 15 years of partnership between Meharry Medical College and Vanderbilt University Medical Center, the Meharry-Vanderbilt Alliance (MVA) is awarding grants to support activities that promote ongoing, mutually beneficial, health research partnerships between community organizations and academic researchers.

"Investing in our community is a wonderful way to celebrate the Alliance's 15 years. I applaud the faculty and the community organizations for coming together to work on these critical issues that are high priorities in the community," said Charles P. Mouton, M.D., M.S., senior vice president for health affairs and dean of the School of Medicine at Meharry Medical College.

Funds are being awarded for two types of grants: Partnership Development and Community-Engaged Research. Partnership Development grants are up to $2,500 and will support new partnerships or strengthening of an existing partnership between a community organization and an academic researcher. Community-Engaged Research grants are up to $10,000 and intended for established community-academic partnerships and a well-defined joint project focused on reducing and eliminating health disparities.

"We have heavily invested in supporting community-engaged research and it is great to see the partnerships between our two institutions and with the community to address these important health conditions," said Gordon Bernard, associate vice chancellor for research at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

A 12-member review panel of six academic and six community representatives reviewed the proposals and scored them based on scientific merit, feasibility, and community priority. A number of outstanding proposals were submitted and the selection of the awardees was a difficult decision. Based on the merit review, the Alliance will award approximately $25,000 for two partnership development grants and two community-engaged research grants.

"We are delighted to receive these outstanding applications in response to our call for proposals. It is an inspiration to see the dedication of our community and our
institutions to solve some very challenging health conditions," said Consuelo H. Wilkins, M.D., executive director of the Meharry-Vanderbilt Alliance.

The research team of Nia Foderingham, M.D. of Meharry Medical College and Kimberly Jackson from Health Impacts of Degraded Environments, has been approved for a Community-Engaged Research grant titled Examining Environmental Exposures to Address Respiratory Health Disparities. The Martha O’Bryan Center is also a partner on the initiative. Ms. Jackson said, “I am honored to be receiving the MVA 15-Year Anniversary Grant and am confident that our collaboration will yield important community-based research that addresses disparate respiratory health outcomes in the Cayce community.”

Also awarded for a Community-Engaged Research grant titled, Social Marketing for Pre-Teen Vaccines: Cultural Adaptation for Hispanic Families is the team of Pamela Hull, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University and Juan Canedo, Nashville Latino Health Coalition. Canedo remarked, “The Meharry-Vanderbilt Alliance grant awarded to our existing community-partnership reflects the ongoing efforts of community members and researchers who have worked together to reduce and eliminate health disparities in our city.”

One of the two Partnership Development grants was awarded to the partnership between Melanie Lutenbacher, Ph.D., MSN, FAAN, Vanderbilt University School of Nursing and Julie Hamilton, Julie’s Village. Their project is titled Planning for the Evaluation of a Community-based Prenatal Intervention: Best Baby. “With this award and partnership, Julie’s Village will now have help to improve data collection as we seek to prove the prenatal intervention The Best Baby Shower increases the duration women are able to breastfeed. We hope to scale the model nationally and we’ve done as much as we can without the expert help the Meharry-Vanderbilt Alliance will offer. We are so thankful for this opportunity,” Julie Hamilton said.

Also receiving a Partnership Development grant titled, Expand and Integrate Biospecimen Donation Education Capacity within the Nashville Health Disparities Coalition. The team of Margaret Hargreaves Ph.D., Meharry Medical College and Katina Beard, director, institutional advancement at Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center, will partner on this project. Dr. Hargreaves noted, “I am delighted to be a part of the Alliance 15th Year anniversary celebration, and to benefit from their vision of the value of partnership development to effective community health activities”.

About the Meharry-Vanderbilt Alliance
The Alliance's vision is to be a leader in advancing inter-institutional collaborations to enhance and support high-impact translational research, inter-professional learning and community engagement. The Alliance's mission is to enrich learning and advance clinical research by developing and supporting mutually beneficial partnerships between MMC, VUMC and the communities they serve. More information is available at www.meharry-vanderbilt.org.