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## Biochemistry Professor Awarded Grant for Protein Study

Winthrop University

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## Quick Facts

- Takita Sumter, chemistry, has received a \$167,428 grant for her research "Determination of the Role of Protein Arginine Methylation in HMGA1a Function."
- The grant is the largest science grant in Winthrop's history.



*Takita Sumter*

ROCK HILL, S.C. - The **National Science Foundation** has announced that **Takita F. Sumter**, assistant professor of chemistry, has been awarded a \$167,428 **Research Initiation Grant (RIG)** for her proposed research "Determination of the Role of Protein Arginine Methylation in HMGA1a Function."

The award is effective May 1 and expires April 30, 2008.

This grant is the **largest science research grant** in Winthrop's history, said Pat Owens, chair of the Department of Chemistry, Physics and Geology. The competitive grant is evidence of success of the university's direction over the past decade as Winthrop has completely modernized its science facilities and placed increased emphasis on student "deep learning" through engaged scholarly research. Award recommendations for the program are made based upon peer reviews by a panel of nationally distinguished scientists assembled by the National Science Foundation.

**Sumter** is a biochemist teaching both general chemistry and biochemistry this semester. She also is responsible for Winthrop's chemistry seminar program.

The grant will provide funding to investigate how proteins that regulate the conversions of genes to proteins can be chemically modified in efforts to control cell growth and signaling. The specific protein that **Sumter** is studying is the High Mobility Group protein, which typically bears various chemical modifications depending on cellular conditions.

"I will be investigating the molecular significance of these modifications to determine if the presence of chemical groups (such as methyl groups on amino acids like arginine) impacts the protein's ability to interact with other biological molecules," she said. "Because the main goal of research at Winthrop is to provide a practical teaching tool that allows students to integrate concepts from a variety of courses, the grant will provide stipends to students for research participation both in the summer and during the academic year."

The grant also proposes to modify courses so that the topics covered include cutting-edge research that directly relates to basic courses in general chemistry and biochemistry as an additional means of increasing student interest in biology and chemistry.

**Sumter** completed her Ph.D. in biochemistry at the University of South Carolina and her postdoctoral research fellowship with the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. She authored the recent biochemistry self-study that has since resulted in Winthrop now offering one of three ACS-approved biochemistry programs in South Carolina.

**Sumter** also is one of six faculty members working on a new federal grant to increase biomedical science research capacity at Winthrop. The federal grant is part of the IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence program, an initiative sponsored by the National Institutes of Health through the National Center for Research Resources.

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