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### **CDC Foundation Awards Xavier University of Louisiana \$420,000 To Address COVID-19 Infections Among Marginalized African Americans in New Orleans**

**NEW ORLEANS, LA--** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Foundation entered a cooperative agreement with Xavier University of Louisiana, providing \$420,000 to develop mitigation strategies to reduce and prevent the disproportionate COVID-19 transmission among African Americans in the New Orleans metropolitan area. The New Orleans area has experienced one of the highest rates of mortality from COVID-19 in the state of Louisiana and the nation. Xavier, with support from the CDC Foundation, is implementing a wide-reaching campaign to counter health disparities and raise awareness in an effort to combat COVID-19.

This important funding opportunity is helping to fill a void for African Americans hit the hardest by the pandemic by documenting the social determinants and health disparities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Our efforts with the elderly and other community members and organizations through this opportunity will help identify specific impacts related to economics, food insecurity, social isolation, and other mental health conditions.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the health disparities faced by people of color in the United States,” said **Reynold Verret**, President of Xavier University of Louisiana. “Xavier students are taught to seek a more just and humane society, including in the realms of public health. Xavier is proud to join the efforts of the CDC in developing strategies to reduce the rate of infection using research and science.”

The university is already working to engage the community through collaborations with local partners. These include neighborhood associations, community leaders, faith-based organizations, the City of New Orleans Health Department, and other educational institutions.

“This award from the CDC will allow for the research and planning that is critical in preventing health disparities,” said **Dr. Anne McCall**, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at Xavier University of Louisiana. “At Xavier we rely on evidence-based educational and clinical practices that reflect our long-standing core values of compassion, professional excellence, community engagement and life-long learning. The only way to change the world is by addressing the real issues that affect us. This award will aid Xavier in accomplishing the mission of creating a more just and humane society for all.”

The “Southern Strategy” project is supported by the Cooperative Agreement number 6 NU38OT000288-02-07, CFDA Number(s) 93.421, and awarded to the CDC Foundation. It is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award, totaling \$420,000 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, the CDC/HHS or the U.S. government.

“The interest from within Xavier to provide assistance with the coronavirus pandemic has been overwhelmingly positive,” said **Dr. Faye Grimsley**, Department Head of Public Health Sciences and principal investigator. “The CDC Foundation cooperative agreement will provide support in the development of community health workers and students to assist with community outreach and engagement, which are important elements of gaining community members’ trust and acceptance of public health-based COVID-19 mitigation strategies related to hand washing, physical distancing, vaccination, contact tracing, and wearing face masks which help prevent the transmission and reduce the spread of the coronavirus disease.”

### **About Xavier University of Louisiana**

Being America’s only historically Black and Catholic University is only the first among many distinctions that have set Xavier University of Louisiana apart for more than nine decades. Despite its relatively small size (3,300 students), Xavier is a nationally recognized leader in the STEM and the health sciences, producing more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Its College of Pharmacy is among the top producers of African American pharmacists.

Its liberal arts-based programs in such areas as art, business, education, psychology, and political science – as well as recent additions in bioinformatics, data science, neuroscience, crime and social justice, and jazz studies – offer students an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities, and life experiences. The winning Xavier formula provides students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls.

For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at [www.xula.edu](http://www.xula.edu) or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. To book interviews and/or to speak with our experts in the field of pharmacy, education, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications, and the arts, contact Lance Sumler at (504) 520-5240 or [lsumler@xula.edu](mailto:lsumler@xula.edu).

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