

LSU's Pennington Biomedical Celebrates a Year of Successes, Looks Forward to 2023

Pennington Biomedical scientists work daily in nutrition and metabolism research to find solutions to the country's most pressing health challenges



**Pennington Biomedical
Research Center**
Louisiana State University

Baton Rouge, Louisiana Dec 22, 2022 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - As the calendar turns to 2023, many people are reflecting on the happenings of 2022. For LSU's [Pennington Biomedical Research Center](#), 2022 was a year of success in more ways than one.

“Every day, close to 500 people who make up Pennington Biomedical leverage their expertise in nutrition and metabolism research to find solutions to our most pressing health challenges,” said Dr. John Kirwan, Executive Director of Pennington Biomedical. “I am so proud of the work being done here day in and day out – and not because of the accolades our successes garner for Pennington Biomedical, but because our accomplishments are improving the lives of people here in our own state and all around the world.”

For example, in March, the nation's first integrated, interdisciplinary metabolic treatment center, [the Metamor Institute](#), officially opened its doors to patients and is now fully operational. In 2019, Pennington Biomedical Research Center began working with Louisiana Economic Development, the Office of Governor John Bel Edwards, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge, and LSU Health New Orleans to establish the program.

During the 2022 legislative session, championed by Gov. John Bel Edwards, lawmakers made a historic investment in public higher education – an investment that strengthened Pennington Biomedical's research programs. Historically, the state invested money for Pennington Biomedical to develop and begin implementing a novel statewide childhood obesity prevention and treatment program developed by its scientists. The program is slated to launch in 2023.

The state's investment also included funds directed to Pennington Biomedical for faculty recruitment

that enables the Center to continue bringing the world's foremost researchers to Baton Rouge. On average, each Pennington Biomedical faculty member brings in \$750,000 in research funding annually that further strengthening Pennington Biomedical's economic impact.

This summer, it was announced that Pennington Biomedical scientists Drs. Steven B. Heymsfield and Justin C. Brown are part of a team led by the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, Weill Cornell Medicine, and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory that has secured \$25 million to take on the challenge of cachexia, the debilitating wasting condition responsible for up to 30 percent of cancer deaths, which lines up with LSU President William F. Tate IV's Scholarship First priority on cancer research.

In focusing on the health of those throughout the state, Pennington Biomedical has received a total of \$60 million in National Institutes of Health, or NIH, grants to support the Louisiana Clinical and Translational Science, or LA CaTS, Center. The [LA CaTS Center](#) has built a statewide research infrastructure based on a collaborative partnership involving 11 major Louisiana academic, research, and healthcare delivery institutions in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport areas.

Again, this year, Pennington Biomedical was awarded a \$20 million, five-year grant from NIH that will allow the LA CaTS Center to continue its work to make Louisiana healthier by addressing health disparities and improving health outcomes in the state's underserved population with chronic diseases by funding research partner institutions. The NIH LA CaTS Center funding has enabled LA CaTS Center partners to leverage an additional \$210 million in external grant awards.

In September, Dr. Kirwan participated in the historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health — the first White House Conference on hunger, nutrition, and health in over 50 years. Dr. Kirwan said that the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health has the opportunity to profoundly impact the future health of our nation by improving nutrition security and diet-related disease prevention.

Pennington Biomedical faculty continued to receive international accolades in 2022 as well. Five current and former renowned Pennington Biomedical scientists are the [most cited researchers in the world](#). Dr. Claude Bouchard leads the pack, with over 167,000 citations of his research papers in scientific literature. Drs. George Bray, Steven Heymsfield, Eric Ravussin, and Peter Katzmarzyk are also among the most cited researchers on this prestigious list.

"I know everyone recognizes the gem that we have in Pennington Biomedical. There is just nothing like it in this entire country and their contributions to LSU are immense. We will certainly do anything and our power to support Pennington for a lifetime," LSU Board of Supervisors Member Laurie Lipsey Aronson said at a recent Board meeting.

Other major news about Pennington Biomedical's success in 2022 includes the following:

- A diet that works for one individual may not work well for another and Pennington Biomedical researchers are at the forefront of research to identify how to identify the most appropriate diet for a specific individual. Drs. Eric Ravussin and Leanne Redman received a new five-year, **\$8.6 million grant**, [Nutrition for Precision Health](#), to learn how to predict an individual's unique response to a specific diet. Information from their research will enable physicians to offer truly personalized nutrition prescriptions for patients that will improve health and treat chronic diseases. Enrollment for this new study will begin early in 2023.
- Pennington Biomedical is heading a consortium of the state's leading biomedical research institutions, including LSU Health New Orleans, to investigate the consequences of long COVID

under an NIH grant award. Pennington Biomedical scientists have [already identified exercise](#) as a way to break the long COVID cycle of inflammation, which can lead to developing diabetes and depression months after recovering from the virus. This adds to the millions of dollars of funding the Center has received for contributions to national efforts to fight this virus.

- S. News & World Report has once again named the [DASH Diet](#) as [one of the best diets for 2022](#). The DASH Diet, developed in part by Pennington Biomedical, is listed as the #2 best diet overall and #2 best diet for healthy eating. U.S. News & World Report has included the DASH Diet as a top-ranked diet for more than 11 years.
- The Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation hosted a number of events in 2022, including welcoming international recording artist soprano Renée Fleming, who presented her 'Music and the Mind' series at Pennington Biomedical.

“We are proud of all of our successes over the last year,” Dr. Kirwan said, “and we are looking forward to more in 2023. We want the people of Baton Rouge and Louisiana to know about the great research and breakthroughs happening every day right here at Pennington Biomedical, and the impact this research will have on their lives and their children’s lives. As we reflect on 2022, join me in celebrating these successes and be on the lookout for many more in the coming year.”

For more news and successes from 2022 for Pennington Biomedical visit <https://www.pbrc.edu/news/media/2022/>.

About the Pennington Biomedical Research Center

The Pennington Biomedical Research Center is at the forefront of medical discovery as it relates to understanding the triggers of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and dementia. The Center architected the national “Obecity, USA” awareness and advocacy campaign to help solve the obesity epidemic by 2040. The Center conducts basic, clinical, and population research, and is affiliated with LSU.

The research enterprise at Pennington Biomedical includes over 480 employees within a network of 40 clinics and research laboratories and 13 highly specialized core service facilities. Its scientists and physicians/scientists are supported by research trainees, lab technicians, nurses, dietitians, and other support personnel. Pennington Biomedical is a state-of-the-art research facility on a 222-acre campus in Baton Rouge.

For more information, see www.pbrc.edu.



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