



Message From the Center Director



John Kirwan, PhD
LA CaTS Center Executive Director,
Pennington Biomedical Research
Center

This is my final message to you as Director of the LA CaTS Center, and, truth be told, it is a hard one to write. I have had the honor of leading this Center for almost 9 years, and it has been the most rewarding work of my career. I want to use this moment, my last in these pages, to say thank you. Not the polite kind, but the deep and lasting kind.

When we set out, we shared a simple conviction: that Louisiana could build a translational science enterprise second to none and that we would do it together, across institutions and across the state. You proved it. Consider what this Center has accomplished over the life of the grant:

- Helped secure more than \$394M in grants for Louisiana, including \$275M from the NIH
- Supported investigators in producing more than 2,000 publications and 1,200 presentations
- Expanded our partnerships, including Ochsner, to deepen data access and research capacity
- Enrolled a clinical trial population that is roughly 52% minority, reflecting the Louisiana we serve
- Sustained active Community Advisory Boards guiding our research and outreach statewide
- Logged more than 1,650 core service uses across the program, including 280 in cycle 3 to date
- Supported 30+ scholar promotions and delivered 225+ educational events to over 2,000 participants
- Served as an awardee or collaborator on 12 NIH supplement grants totaling more than \$9.3M

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Event Highlights

★ 2026 NISBRE ★



The LA CaTS Center Administrative Team & Core Leaders attended the 10th Biennial National IDeA Symposium of Biomedical Research Excellence (NISBRE) on June 14-17, 2026 in Rockville, MD. Dr. Erica Brown, NIGMS Acting Director, was one of the keynote speakers.

This national conference is a premier event showcasing the scientific and training achievements of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) IDeA program, including INBRE, COBRE, CTR, I-RED Programs. Attendees were also given the opportunity to connect with NIH scientific and programmatic staff.

★ LA CaTS at Translational Science 2026 ★



Our current LA CaTS Roadmap Scholars attended the Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS) 2026 Translational Science (TS26) meeting, which took place April 20–23, 2026 in Milwaukee, WI. This four-day event brought together leaders and emerging voices in translational science and clinical research for scientific sessions, networking, and collaboration. The theme this year centered on *Building Trustworthy Translation: Rigor, Reproducibility, and Real World Impact*.

ACTS advances the discipline of clinical and translational science with which it relates to improving human health. For more information, click [here](#).

★ Congrats to Our Graduates ★



The LA CaTS Center congratulates our Roadmap Scholars on their graduation on May 15, 2026.

Read more [here](#).



SPOTLIGHT: LA CaTS Regulatory Resource



Our **Regulatory Resource (RR)** is a key driver of efficient, compliant research across partner institutions. By connecting IRBs and regulatory offices within a coordinated network, the RR supports shared problem-solving, helping to streamline approvals and strengthen the quality of multi-site studies. This important resource is led by Leigh Lamonica, JD, Director of Legal & Regulatory Compliance at Pennington Biomedical Research Center. Ms. Lamonica is supported by a team of regulatory specialists- Michelle Magee, Katelyn Atkins, and Brittney Bergeron. The RR is housed within the LA CaTS Administrative Core.

Through **pre-review and consultation services**, regulatory specialists help investigators strengthen protocols and informed consent documents before submission, reducing delays and administrative burden. Just in the current reporting year, **over 30 investigators benefited from these services**, underscoring the resource's impact on research productivity.

The Regulatory Resource recently collaborated with multiple LA CaTS Center Cores to develop a standardized process for determining whether Clinical Trials Units are classified as rural or urban. This cross-core effort improved regulatory clarity for multi-site studies and supports more efficient study planning and classification moving forward.

In addition, the RR advances reliance pathways, provides regulatory training, and equips investigators to navigate complex requirements ensuring research is both efficient and ethically sound. Therefore, the LA CaTS Center is proud to highlight the Regulatory Resource as our quarterly *Center Spotlight*.

Interested in contacting the Regulatory Resource for a consultation? Email ethicsreg@lacats.org or make a request on our online [SPARC system](#).



CROWN was officially introduced on May 1, 2026, in Baton Rouge and surrounding parishes. This marks the beginning of a growing, statewide effort designed to ensure that community voices play a key role in shaping health research and solutions. CROWN will expand to the New Orleans area this fall and the rest of the state in 2027.

At its core, CROWN is a network of individuals and partners who are passionate about improving health and wellness in their communities, led by the LA CaTS Community Engagement & Outreach Core. By bringing together residents, healthcare providers, and researchers, the initiative creates a bridge between lived experiences and scientific study—ensuring that research is relevant, inclusive, and impactful.

This network is about empowering communities. CROWN gives people the opportunity to stay informed, get involved, and contribute to meaningful change in the health of Louisiana.

Members who join CROWN can expect to receive:

- Updates on ongoing and upcoming health research studies
- Access to health and wellness education resources
- Information about community events and outreach opportunities happening in their areas

For questions regarding CROWN, email community@lacats.org.

JOIN CROWN

Recap: LA CaTS Coordinator Level II Training



On April 16, 2026 we successfully completed another LA CaTS Coordinator II Training. This training provided interactive discussion on **research ethics** in which PIs and research experts examine complex cases and emerging ethical dilemmas, including the use of **AI in research**, and provide practical guidance for navigating them.

There were **116** in-person and **365** Zoom attendees. Thank you to speakers and attendees for making this event successful.



✦✦ NIH Updates ✦✦

NIH requires a new biosketch format using the federal "[Common Form](#)" via [SciENcv](#), necessitating ORCID IDs for all Senior/Key Personnel. The new format splits into a standardized Common Form (Positions, Prep) and a separate NIH Supplement (Personal Statement, Contributions).

Access the New NIH Biosketch Format [here](#).

HATS OFF TO OUR RESEARCHERS



John Apolzan, PhD
Pennington Biomedical
Research Center



Leanne Redman, PhD
Pennington Biomedical
Research Center

[Named 2026 Excellence in Nutrition Fellows](#)



Amanda Staiano, PhD
Pennington Biomedical
Research Center



Owen Carmichael, PhD
Pennington Biomedical
Research Center

[Elected to the Editorial Board for the Journal of
Physical Activity & Health](#)

[Named the James W. and Neil Ann Parks
Professor for Dementia Research, Prevention
and Treatment](#)



Robert Newton, PhD
Pennington Biomedical
Research Center



Jacob Mey, PhD
Pennington Biomedical
Research Center

[Elected as President of The Society for
Behavioral Medicine](#)

[Named a Media Spokesperson for the
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#)

Institutional News

Another Record-Breaking Year for LSU



Continuing its momentum, LSU's Flagship has surpassed \$600 million in annual research activity after breaking the \$500 million threshold for the first time last year. The achievement underscores five consecutive years of unprecedented research growth.

Read more [here](#).

Funding & Training Opportunities



LA CaTS Grant Development Award

Program supports investigators with sufficient preliminary data to support collaborative grant-writing teams. Awards are up to \$5,000 in total costs.

[More details](#)

Open enrollment until the maximum numbers of awards are met.



LA CaTS Visiting Scholars Program supports training opportunities for junior investigators to enhance skills or learn new technique. Awards are up to \$5,000 in total costs.

Open enrollment until the maximum numbers of awards are met.

[More details](#)



Short Experiences in Clinical Trials support junior investigators in clinical or translational research, and to link them with clinical trial mentors to assist their development in the field. Each award may be up to \$5,000 in total costs. **Open enrollment until the maximum numbers of awards are met.**

[More details](#)



LA CaTS in the Community



CROWN Makes First Community Appearance at Love Heals Baton Rouge Free Clinic

On Saturday, May 16, 2026, the Community Research for Optimal Wellness Network (CROWN) proudly participated as a vendor at the Love Impact Coalition's *Love Heals Baton Rouge* Free Clinic.

The event brought together hundreds of individuals and families from across the Baton Rouge community, all of whom received free healthcare services—including medical, dental, and vision care—without barriers or requirements. The day was filled with compassion, connection, and a shared commitment to improving community wellness.

For CROWN, this event marked an exciting milestone as our first community engagement since officially launching on May 1, 2026. We were honored to connect with attendees, educate them about CROWN, and support the mission of Love Impact Coalition.

Calendar of Events



[LA CaTS Baton Rouge Community Advisory Board Meeting](#)

Jul 15, 2026
Baton Rouge, LA



[6th Annual Community Based Participatory Research Immersion Training and Mentorship Program](#)

Jul 21-24, 2026
Zoom



[LA CaTS New Orleans Community Advisory Board Meeting](#)

Jul 24, 2026
New Orleans, LA



[Pennington Biomedical Research Center's 2026 Annual Childhood Obesity Conference](#)

Sep 24, 2026
Baton Rouge, LA



[LA CaTS Baton Rouge Community Advisory Board Meeting](#)

Oct 14, 2026
Baton Rouge, LA



[LA CaTS New Orleans Community Advisory Board Meeting](#)

Oct 23, 2026
New Orleans, LA

[See full calendar details](#)

Recent Publications

[Age-dependent impairment of cardiac function and physical performance in male mice with diet-induced obesity.](#)

Baumgarten P, Kamp J, Hegemann N, Deubel S, Berndt N, Grune J, Kuebler WM, Axelrod CL, Kirwan JP, Höhn A, Heider S, Ott C, Grune T. *Geroscience*. 2026 Apr;48(2):2295-2309.

[Fueling asthma inflammation via bioenergetic metabolic reprogramming.](#)

Mulya A, Janocha AJ, Novotny MV, Reichard A, Hamm E, Chen R, Mey JT, Peterson L, Mavrakis L, Beck B, Koo M, Sharp J, Pennington E, McCarroll S, Micklewright S, Zhang P, Koziol-White C, Aronica M, Comhair SAA, Kirwan JP, Barnard J, Panettieri RA Jr, Darley-Usmar V, Erzurum SC. *Redox Biol*. 2026 Jun;93:104160.

[Disseminating and Implementing the Science of Pediatric Obesity Treatment and Prevention.](#)

Staiano AE, Estabrooks PA, Buccini G, Cook SR, Davis AM, Davison K, Fiechtner L, Heerman WJ, Hill JL, Inge TH, Jelalian E, Kelly AS, Martin CK, McLoughlin GM, Redman LM, Ruggiero C, Ryder J, Skinner AC, Sweeney B, Katzmarzyk PT. *Obesity (Silver Spring)*. 2026 May 5;10.1002/oby.70197.

[Transcriptional remodeling of human skeletal muscle following sleep restriction in postmenopausal women.](#)

Suryadevara HNSK, Hebert RC, Staszkiwicz J, Ravussin E, Marlatt KL, Singh P, Ghosh S. *Physiol Genomics*. 2026 May 1;58(5):225-238.

[Use of Machine Learning to Identify Determinants of Habitual-Preformed Water Intake.](#)

Stinson EJ, Collins E, Cabeza De Baca T, Gluck ME, Dote-Montero M, Racette SB, Kavouras SA, Das SK, Piaggi P, Votruba S, Hale A, Chang DC. *J Nutr*. 2026 May;156(5):101475.

[Households Provided Free Produce Require Intensive Intervention to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Intake and Reduce Plate Waste: A Randomized Trial.](#)

Roe BE, Diktas HE, Qi D, Martin CK, Apolzan JW. *J Nutr*. 2026 Apr;156(4):101403.

[Diverging Paths: Longitudinal and Reciprocal Associations Between Two Fundamental Motor Skill Assessments in Preschoolers.](#)

Webster EK, Spring KE, Moore JX, Brandon D, Staiano AE. *Child Care Health Dev*. 2026 May;52(3):e70295.

[Effect of 2-Year Caloric Restriction in the Absence of Malnutrition on Indicators of Anemia, Iron Status, and Hepcidin in Healthy Adults: A Randomized Clinical Trial.](#)

Dugan C, Das SK, Racette SB, Martin CK, Ravussin E, Redman LM, Hennigar SR. *J Nutr*. 2026 May;156(5):101474.

[Prevalence of Preclinical and Clinical Obesity Among US Children and Adolescents Aged 5 to 18 Years: NHANES 2017-2023.](#)

Chaudhary P, Yang S, Waldrop S, Katzmarzyk PT, Staiano AE. *Obesity (Silver Spring)*. 2026 Apr 19;10.1002/oby.70198.

[Non-invasive islet \$\beta\$ -cell markers track with weight-loss interventions for type 2 diabetes: a prospective cohort study.](#)

Sun H, Shen Y, Burke SJ, Brantley P, Brock R, Zhang D, Yang S, Hu G, Collier JJ. Int J Obes (Lond). 2026 Apr 8.

[Predictors of Redemption among Low-Income, Pregnant Women, Infants, and Children Participants: A Secondary Analysis of a Multicomponent eHealth Behavioral Intervention Study.](#)

Falkenhain K, Flanagan EW, Cabre HE, Kracht CL, Apolzan JW, Redman LM. J Nutr. 2026 Apr;156(4):101421.

[Effect of an herbal supplement on quality of life in participants with insomnia: A randomized placebo controlled cross-over pilot trial.](#)

Singh P, Griffith I, Tanksley M, Beyl RA, Greenway F. PLoS One. 2026 May 20;21(5):e0350039.

[Probability of meeting the restrained sitting guideline in early childhood: an international cross-sectional study.](#)

Spring KE, Webster EK, Beyl RA, Abdeta C, Aoko OA, Bayasgalan J, Byambaa A, Chelly MS, Chia M, Del Pozo-Cruz J, Draper C, Engberg E, Ghofranipour F, Guan H, Ha AS, El Hamdouchi A, Zarghani NH, Hossain MS, Jáuregui A, Koh D, Kontsevaya A, Löf M, Lubree H, Mwase-Vuma T, Reilly JJ, Tanaka C, Teo WP, Turrab A, Uzicanin E, Veldman S, Okely AD, Katzmarzyk PT, Staiano AE. J Sci Med Sport. 2026 Apr 27:S1440-2440(26)00157-X.

[A Novel Method to Evaluate Insulin Sensitivity by Combining Continuous Glucose Monitoring and Urinary C-Peptide Excretion.](#)

Sanchez-Delgado G, Marlatt KL, Beyl RA, Sparks JR, Flanagan EW, Greenway FL, Ravussin E. Diabetes Obes Metab. 2026 May 4.

[Sepsis Dysregulates Mitochondrial microRNA and Biogenesis in the Diaphragm but Not Limb Muscle.](#)

Gill L, Molina P, Simon L. Int J Mol Sci. 2026 May 9;27(10):4222.

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