



UNIVERSITY *of* HOUSTON

NIH AWARDS \$2.3 MILLION GRANT TO FUND DRUG ABUSE RESEARCH

A center dedicated to building the multidisciplinary drug abuse research capacity of the University of Houston is the focus of a five-year, \$2.3 million grant awarded to the Graduate College of Social Work's Office of Drug and Social Policy Research (ODSPR).

Funding for the initiative comes from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which is part of the National Institutes for Health (NIH). The funds will support the creation of the Minority Institutes' Drug Abuse Research Development Program (DARDP) at UH.

"The emphasis of the DARDP is to train and mentor faculty and graduate students on the health and social consequences of drug abuse among aging minority populations and address drug abuse prevention, intervention and service research," said Avelardo Valdez, director of the ODSPR and principal investigator of the initiative. "The institute will address drug use within the context of other related social and health problems confronting aging Latino-injecting heroin users and will contribute to improving the health of this population in the Houston area."

Focusing on developing research projects, the DARDP will collaborate with the Graduate College of Social Work, other UH departments and drug treatment organizations in the Houston area. The grant will fund workshops, seminars and small grants, and establish a peer-review ad-hoc committee.

The grant also will fund two studies on aging Latino men in Houston's near Northside and East End communities, where, Valdez said, there is a high rate of heroin use among Latinos.

The first will study 225 users and look into the consequences of the addiction on their life's path, long-term health implications and community and family support. The second study will focus on the role social networks, such as family and peers, play in a lifetime of heroine use. Both studies will investigate users, those who are in treatment and those who are not in treatment.

The overall objective is to develop the capacity of UH faculty to complete for external funding, particularly at the NIH level.