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**Subject:** Ferris Pharmaceutical Sciences Professor Receives Young Investigator Grant  
**Attachments:** Eric Nybo.jpg

Included below is a press release detailing research underway in Ferris State University's Shimadzu Core Laboratory for Academic and Research Excellence. Dr. Eric Nybo, in Ferris' Pharmaceutical Sciences department has received a 2 year, \$70,000 Young Investigator Grant from the Brain and Behavioral Research Foundation, which is focused on producing a drug to address insomnia and treatment of anxiety by matching the chemical profile of valerianic acid.

Second-year Pharmacy students Kayla Maki and Jacqueline Saunders are assisting Dr. Nybo in the research. Any media requests regarding this release can be directed to John Smith, Communications Specialist.

The attached photo is Dr. Eric Nybo, a member of the Pharmaceutical Sciences department at Ferris, and the recipient of the Young Investigator Grant from the Brain and Behavioral Research Foundation.

Read an online version of the story, here...

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/archive/2015/october/nybo.htm>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 28, 2015

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### **Grant Funds Ferris Professor's Research of Possible Anti-Anxiety, Insomnia Drug**

BIG RAPIDS, Mich.---A two-year grant-funded study is underway on the Ferris State University campus, as an assistant professor and two second-year Pharmacy graduate students conduct experiments in the new Shimadzu Core Laboratory for Academic and Research Excellence.

Eric Nybo, from Ferris' Pharmaceutical Sciences department, received a \$70,000 Young Investigator Grant from the Brain and Behavioral Research Foundation. The research project, "Synthesis of terpene-based sedatives utilizing a novel metabolically engineered host" will shape genetic information in e.coli bacteria, to

facilitate production of a compound intended to treat anxiety and insomnia. Nybo said that Ferris provided the initial funding to develop the study's preliminary data.

"We spent a lot of time of growing up the strains, producing samples, getting them ready to be analyzed," Nybo said. "We did a lot of early analysis through the University of Kentucky. Now, with the Shimadzu Core Lab, we're going to scale up our efforts, produce more samples and analyze them in house."

The project's goal is to generate a compound with a similar chemical profile to valerianic acid. Valerian Herb is an over-the-counter supplement that is drawn from the root of the plant. Nybo said they hope to develop a "microbial pharma-factory" that would produce a higher yield of the necessary compound, with greater purity.

"We're hoping we can convert what is a nutraceutical, in the form of Valerian Herb into a drug that could be marketed to patients directly," Nybo said. "Something that you could take as a prescription for insomnia, or anxiety. We'd like to turn this into an FDA-approved drug."

Nybo said Kayla Maki, of Allendale, Mich. and Jacqueline Saunders from Marquette, Mich. are the second-year Pharmacy students participating in the research project.

"They were immensely helpful, they're producing poster presentations," Nybo said.

Saunders participated in a Student Research Fellowship this past summer related to the project, with Nybo as her faculty mentor. Maki and Saunders will continue their involvement in this study, while they pursue doctoral degrees from the College of Pharmacy.

This research project has foundation grant support through January 2018. Nybo said the presence of the Shimadzu Core Laboratory for Academic and Research Excellence was an important element in the success of his application.

"We're delighted for this opportunity, the grant was kind of a bolt of lightning at the right moment," Nybo said. "It shows Ferris' strong contribution to the research environment on campus, both for faculty and students. I hope it means great things down the road for other colleges and other faculty as well."

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