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JSU chemistry professor, students to study origins of life

(JACKSON, Miss.) – A Jackson State University chemistry professor and two of his students are participating in a National Science Foundation project that will focus on the chemical origin of life.

Jerzy Leszczynski, director of JSU's Computational Center for Molecular Structure and Interactions, will work with chemistry doctoral students Yana Kholod and Dmytro Kosenkov of Jackson, who are originally from Ukraine.

Georgia Institute of Technology is sponsoring the "The Origins Project," which is funded through a \$1.5 million NSF grant.

Leszczynski said JSU's role in the project is to verify experimental data through theoretical calculations.

"We are trying to find out through collaborative research ... how simple chemical compounds could react together to form complex molecules to originate biologically important structures – life," he said.

Nicholas Hud of Georgia Tech is the principal investigator for the project. In addition to Leszczynski, other investigators include Thomas Orlando of Georgia Tech, David Lynn of Emory University, and Jean-Marie Dimandja of Spelman College.

For more information, contact Jerzy Leszczynski at 601-979-3482 or jerzy@ccmsi.us.

Photo: <http://www.jsums.edu/~announcements/jerzy.jpg>

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About Jackson State University

Jackson State University, founded in 1877, is a historically black, high research activity university located in Jackson, the capital city of the state of Mississippi. Jackson State's nurturing academic environment

challenges individuals to change lives through teaching, research and service. Officially designated as Mississippi's Urban University, Jackson State continues to enhance the state, nation and world through comprehensive economic development, health-care, technological and educational initiatives. The only university in the Jackson metropolitan area, Jackson State is located near downtown, with three satellite campuses throughout the city. For more information, visit www.jsums.edu.