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## Jefferson and Monell Center Sign Letter of Intent to Merge

*Partnership would expand opportunities for world-leading sensory research to improve public health*

PHILADELPHIA (October 12, 2017) – Leadership at Jefferson and the Monell Center announced today the signing of a non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI) to move forward with discussions of merging the two organizations.

The proposed merger would combine Monell, the world’s leader in taste and smell research, with research operations at the new Jefferson (Philadelphia University + Thomas Jefferson University) and Jefferson Health to open new frontiers that will take transformative discoveries about the senses and translate them into clinical practice.

“We will be able to go further than ever before to link the senses to health,” said Stephen K. Klasko, MD, MBA, President and CEO of Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson Health.

“When you combine our clinical work with the entrepreneurial, academic environment of our University, the groundbreaking research that occurs at the Sidney Kimmel Medical College and now add the esteemed Monell Center into the mix, this is how you improve lives.”

Monell is at the forefront of research on the senses of taste and smell. Since its founding in 1968, Monell research has advanced understanding of the mechanisms and functions of taste and smell to benefit human nutrition, health, and well-being. The Center’s interdisciplinary approach focuses on collaboration and innovation, leading to discoveries that guide real-world public policy, industry practices and people’s behavior to enable healthier diets, safer environments, and lead to more powerful ways to address pressing health challenges.

“This partnership would bring together two outstanding Philadelphia institutions with a shared vision of making the world a healthier place for us all,” said Robert F. Margolskee, MD,

PhD, President and Director of the Monell Center. “The tremendous synergies between Monell and Jefferson will enable us to build on our combined strengths in basic science and stem cell biology and translate them into clinical practice. Together, our research will identify solutions to nutrition-related diseases such as obesity, hypertension, and heart disease, and also extend to address cancer, infectious disease, and neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s dementia.”

“The senses of smell and taste have wide-reaching health implications, from a better understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder to detecting the smell of early-stage ovarian cancer,” said Mark Tykocinski, MD, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs at Thomas Jefferson University and The Anthony F. and Gertrude M. DePalma Dean, Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University. “Not only does Monell capture the imagination with research on why women are more sensitive to odors than men, and how breastfeeding can instill a love of vegetables in newborns but also gives insight into how disease and aging change the senses and affect quality of life.”

Merger discussions are a natural next step to the decades-long relationship between the Monell Center and Jefferson Health’s clinical otolaryngology (ENT) department. Over the years, the Monell-Jefferson group collaborated to advance research in chemosensory dysfunction and anosmia, loss of the sense of smell. Other studies investigated taste loss from radiation for head and neck cancers and studied how exposure to breathing noxious fumes impacted olfactory function in firefighters and other first-responders.

“This proposed combination offers both institutions the opportunity to expand into new areas of research and collaborations that will advance our respective missions and add value to students, patients and society,” said Stephen Spinelli Jr., PhD, Chancellor of Jefferson (Philadelphia University + Thomas Jefferson University). “It combines Jefferson’s deep focus on research and patient care with Monell’s world-renowned expertise on how senses impact quality of life and overall health.”

“In 1968, the Ambrose Monell Foundation helped establish the Monell Center to expand the fundamental understanding of taste and smell. Since that time, the Foundation has consistently supported the Center’s strong record of ground-breaking research. Now, we applaud the expanded opportunities presented by partnering with Jefferson to translate

Monell's basic discoveries into applications that benefit human health," said Ambrose K. Monell, President of the Ambrose Monell Foundation and Monell Center board member.

Poised to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, Monell's scientists have a strong legacy of discoveries about how the human body detects and responds to chemicals in the worlds within and around us. Advances over the past decade dramatically illustrate how the primal senses of taste and smell extend well beyond our mouths and noses to detect and vanquish invading bacteria in our airways and parasites in our intestines. Still other developments focus on the regenerative capacities of taste and smell cells, which hold great promise for addressing the decline of the senses associated with aging.

"As Monell looks forward to our next half-century, a partnership with Jefferson would take advantage of the intertwined missions of our two organizations to grow the developing connections that link the senses with human health," said Dwight Risky, PhD, chair of the Monell Center Board of Directors.

Over the last four years, Jefferson has experienced tremendous growth. Thomas Jefferson University and Philadelphia University combined to form the new Jefferson, creating a national comprehensive university delivering 21<sup>st</sup> century professional education. The combined university is redefining the higher education value proposition through a unique model focused on interprofessional and transdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning supported by design and systems thinking, innovation, entrepreneurship, empathy, and the modes of thought central to the liberal arts and scientific inquiry. In addition, Jefferson Health has expanded from a Philadelphia-based academic medical center to a 13-hospital regional network spanning two states by partnering with community-based health systems and leveraging telehealth to deliver vital and accessible healthcare that is more convenient to patients.

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