



## Penn Center for Musculoskeletal Disorders

Louis J. Soslowsky, PhD

Founding Director of the Penn Center for Musculoskeletal Disorders



The Penn Center for Musculoskeletal Disorders (PCMD) was initiated in 2004 with a goal to bring musculoskeletal researchers across campus together at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2006, the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Skin Diseases of the NIH funded our center grant proposal at which time we became one of five such NIH-recognized

Centers in the country ([www.med.upenn.edu/pcmd](http://www.med.upenn.edu/pcmd)). In 2011, this Center grant was renewed for another five years and was the only one of the three up for renewal that was re-funded that year. Through the review by the NIH, Penn scored a perfect “ten” and was hailed as “exceptional” by the review panel! In 2016, we received another “exceptional” score, highest ranked in the country, by the NIH review panel and were renewed for another five years. We were pleased that in 2021, we were renewed again for five more years. We remain the longest running such center in the country.

The overall goal of this Center is to promote cooperative interactions among investigators, accelerate and enrich the effectiveness and efficiency of ongoing research, foster new collaborations and new research, and ultimately, translate our research efforts into better and new therapies for musculoskeletal disorders. The central theme of the Center continues to be “Musculoskeletal Tissue Injury and Repair”. This theme is broad (as it includes all musculoskeletal tissue types, such as bone, cartilage, disc, ligament, meniscus, muscle, and tendon), focused (as takes advantage of commonalities in approaches across tissue types), and clinically significant (as it fosters development of assays, procedures and knowledge in pre-clinical animal and human models of translational relevance). It is important to note that our PCMD is not a “bone center” nor is it a “muscle center”. Rather, it is truly a “musculoskeletal center” and has emerged as the recognized home for musculoskeletal research across the Penn campus and as a technical and intellectual resource for the broader

Philadelphia musculoskeletal research community. Thus, the primary overall aims of this Center are to enhance and advance the research productivity of investigators in musculoskeletal tissue injury and repair by: 1) Providing innovation within critical resource core facilities in areas that cross disciplines, length scales, and hierarchies. These core facilities are mCT Imaging, Biomechanics, and Histology, 2) Developing a pilot and feasibility grant program for investigators, with direct mentorship, whereby new approaches, ideas, and collaborations can be developed prior to seeking extramural funding, 3) Developing educational and research enrichment programs spanning tissue types, research approaches, and paradigms, through which members can learn from national leaders and from each other, and 4) Initiating a new mechanism to allow our Affiliate members access to our Cores with a focus on less resource-rich institutions and those that serve more diverse communities. High quality musculoskeletal research is currently being conducted by many groups at Penn. While many bring sophisticated approaches to bear on musculoskeletal problems, few groups have the required expertise and facilities to perform high quality and specialized assays in their own labs. Furthermore, most investigators are not aware of approaches utilized, and results obtained, in other tissues that may have direct relevance on their research questions. Ultimately, close cooperation, communication, and collaboration among researchers across musculoskeletal tissue types and from a wide variety of disciplines will significantly enhance the research of our members. The Center will provide opportunities to integrate multi-disciplinary techniques to determine mechanisms for tissue function, injury, degeneration, repair, and regeneration, with the ultimate goal of advancing the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases and injuries of the musculoskeletal system.

The Center currently has a membership of more than 180 faculty across five schools at Penn (Perelman School of Medicine, School of Engineering and Applied Science, School of Veterinary Medicine, School of Dental Medicine, and School of Arts and Sciences). We also now have 70 affiliate faculty members for more than 20 institutions regionally as we expand the reach and impact of our Center. For more information on the PCMD, please visit our website at [www.med.upenn.edu/pcmd](http://www.med.upenn.edu/pcmd).