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NEWS RELEASE

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UCM Foundation Funds Research to Sustain Missouri's State Aquatic Animal

WARRENSBURG, Mo. (March 14, 2016) — Research by a University of Central Missouri associate professor to sustain Missouri's state aquatic animal, the paddlefish is getting a boost from a UCM Foundation Opportunity Grant. The grant is benefiting Scott Lankford's research that focuses on developing predictive spawning index and egg quality indicators in paddlefish.

The associate biology professor's overall research program focuses on the physiology of stress on fish as it relates to their reproductive and muscle performance. He began this particular project after being contacted by a 2009 UCM alumnus, Jake Colehour, who manages the Missouri Department of Conservation's Blind Pony hatchery.

"Our students will be investing the molecular markings of these ancient fish through genetic sequence alignment, PCR primer design and RNA isolation," Lankford said. "This pilot project gives our students a worldly perspective for the conservation efforts that go into protecting a valuable fishery and an endangered species. By having this real wild-life question and these sophisticated research tools, our students will become complete and employable scientists." He noted, "We are so grateful for this Foundation Opportunity Grant because it allows us to develop the working protocols to successfully obtain MDC funds."

Since starting the Opportunity Grant Program three years ago, the Foundation has authorized \$98,583 for innovative ideas that faculty and staff have to improve students' learning experiences. Among the 14 projects funded this fiscal year are an aerial drone for communications, masculinity sensitivity training, West African drums, a transmedia storytelling lab and a "flipped" classroom.

The UCM Foundation is a nonprofit organization that raises money to benefit UCM and its students. Established in 1979, the foundation procures, maintains and administers philanthropic gifts that advance the university's mission and help students attain their college goals. Learn more at ucmo.edu/foundation.

To find out more about the project, contact Lankford at 660-543-8876 or lankford@ucmo.edu.

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