TALLAHASSEE, FL — Clifford Louime, Ph.D., coordinator of the CESTA Scholars Program at Florida A&M University, has been selected as a MIT/Harvard Fellow. Dr. Louime is the first alumnus from the FAMU College of Engineering Sciences, Technology and Agriculture to be selected to participate in the MIT/Harvard Fellow program.

Funded through a multi-million dollar grant from the National Institute of Health (NIH), the Faculty Visiting Program at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, recruits one talented faculty each year from across the country to receive training and mentoring in the Genomics Sciences. The Broad Institute, known around the world for leading the international consortium of scientists which sequenced the human genome a few years ago, has expanded its focus to include training in Microbial Genomics, and Functional Genomics.

Louime will be heading to Boston, Massachusetts on May 1, 2010 to begin the program at the Cambridge campus of The Broad. Over the summer, he will participate in training and mentoring in the field of Genomics/Bioinformatics. Louime is looking forward to being a part of this fellowship program over the next few years, which also includes short trips to Cambridge for refreshing courses and learning new biotechnological tools and techniques.

Dr. Louime’s involvement will bring mutual benefits for both FAMU and The Broad. FAMU students working with Dr. Louime on bio-energy issues will have the opportunity to intern at The Broad. In turn, faculty from the Broad will visit FAMU’s campus for on-site training, seminars and collaborative research projects.

“One of the most exciting components of this program is the prospect of collaborative research projects with the Broad” said Louime. This fellowship program will benefit both institutions in the following ways:

- Provide a platform for faculty to enhance their research-oriented teaching
- Increase skills needed to conduct high-quality research in an academic environment
- Promote linkages between the Broad Institute and FAMU leading to further collaborations in research and teaching
- Increase the pool of well-qualified underrepresented minority students entering competitive careers in Genomics/Bioinformatics research

According to Louime, his participation in this fellowship program will engage FAMU in a unique opportunity to increase exposure of students and faculty to the field of bioinformatics and genomics. While participating in the Faculty Mentoring Program for the next 3-5 years, Louime will continue to have remote access to The Broad resources (software and database), and MIT/Harvard faculty will serve as collaborators on diverse research grant proposals with him.

“There is a great need for FAMU to develop formal coursework in this field which will expose students and faculty to important resources such as the Human Genome Project, PubMed, NCBI databases, and other Web-based technologies,” said Louime.

A FAMU graduate earning his master’s degree in plant biotechnology (1999), Louime has a strong aspiration to make a contribution in this field. “With the growing demand for new technology related to DNA / human genome, the future for trained bioinformaticians makes this professional field one of the fastest growing sectors in biotechnology. Thus, FAMU is at a point to begin making its mark in educating young men and women to be the leaders of this new, emerging field,” explained Louime.
“We are very proud and happy that Dr. Louime was selected for such a prestigious fellowship. I am confident that his experience at MIT will beneficial to the faculty and students at FAMU,” stated Makola Abdullah, Dean and Director, Land-Grant Programs at FAMU.

The Broad will initially provide training not only in genomics/bioinformatics but also mentoring in grants proposal to Dr. Louime, who upon return to FAMU campus will share the acquired knowledge with the faculty. This visiting faculty program at the Broad should serve as the basis for implementing broader research, teaching and extension programs at the University level. For information about the Visiting Faculty Program and possibly future research collaborations, please call Dr. Louime at (850) 561-2644 or email: Clifford.Louime@famu.edu.