

Commissioner's Report

June 9, 2006

Prepared for the State Board of Regents and the Utah System of Higher Education

As detailed in the Regents' General Consent Calendar, \$16.8 million in research grants has been awarded – \$5 million to the University of Utah and \$11.8 million to Utah State University – since the last Board meeting.

University of Utah: The New York Office of Public and International Affairs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) recently honored University of Utah President Michael K. Young, former chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, and H.E. John Bolton, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, at a gala in New York City, in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the promotion of international understanding.

Utah State University: World-class researchers Krishna Shenai and David York will develop major research teams at Utah State University as part of the USTAR initiative. Shenai will lead a research team in intelligent systems engineering. His research pertains to solid-state energy conditioning with industrial, commercial, military and space applications. York will build on USU's strengths in nutrition research. His research interests include animal models of obesity, mechanisms that control food intake and nutrient selection and metabolic hormone dependence in animal obesity.

Weber State University: Weber State University sophomore Kalista Francom's research on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was one of only 60 projects selected from more than 3,000 applications nationwide for the prestigious Posters on the Hill event held in Washington, D.C. Francom's poster presentation, "Seven Generations of Child Welfare from an Indian Perspective," provides an historical perspective on how Native American children have been treated during different eras. This marks the second consecutive year that a WSU student was invited to present at the annual event.

Southern Utah University: Commissioner Richard Kendell recognized outgoing Southern Utah University President Steven D. Bennion for his nine years of service in Cedar City during the University's 107th annual commencement exercises on May 6. The Board of Trustees then inducted Bennion into the Southern Utah University Hall of Honor and renamed the current administration building the Milton and Steven D. Bennion Building to share the limelight with the first leader of then Branch Normal School —Steven's grandfather, Milton.

Snow College: Snow College has received a \$1 million gift from David and Verla Sorensen, the largest donation ever earmarked specifically for the Richfield campus. The gift will go into an endowment for nursing scholarships and will also help pay down debt accrued from the construction of the Sevier Valley Center on Snow's Richfield campus. Previously, the Sorensens had given approximately \$500,000 to nursing scholarships and to the Sevier Valley Center. In honor of their generosity, Snow's board of trustees and the Sevier Valley Center board have approved naming the Sevier Valley Center in honor of the Sorensens.

Utah Valley State College: The design-build team Cooper Roberts Simonsen Associates/Alspector Architecture and Layton Construction have been selected to construct the new Digital Learning Center (DLC). Increasing the total size of the facility to 190,000 square feet, this new state-of-the-art, \$48 million library is scheduled for completion in May 2008. Part of the construction plan begins a new campus quad, which will enhance the academic feel of campus. The design will be finalized over the summer and earth will begin to move in September 2006.

Salt Lake Community College: Joseph Bush, the President of SLCC's Phi Theta Kappa honorary society, was chosen as the top community college student in the state of Utah to be recognized as a 2006 American Association of Community Colleges New Century Scholar. Each year at its national meeting, the AACC selects the top student in each of the 50 states to represent his/her state as the New Century Scholar. New Century Scholars are selected for their record of academic achievement and honors, campus leadership and community service, the rigor of their academic program and a student essay. Bush received a one-year scholarship to continue his studies. He plans to transfer to the University of Utah to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering.

Utah College of Applied Technology: The Ogden-Weber Campus (OWATC) of the Utah College of Applied Technology has received the Employer of the Year award from Enable Industries for hiring individuals with disabilities. The Ogden-Weber campus has also recently completed a series of modifications that will allow wheelchair-bound students to complete its high-demand machining program.

Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority: UHEAA is urging students and parents to consolidate their college loans before July 1, 2006 when interest rates will increase to their highest rates in six years from the current in-repayment rate of 5.3 percent to 7.14 percent. Before July 1, borrowers can lock in a lower rate for the life of the loan and combine their separate loans into a single consolidation loan. UHEAA offers valuable benefits to borrowers on consolidation

loans including a 1 percent interest rate reduction after the borrower makes 36 on-time payments and an additional 0.5 percent interest rate reduction for auto-debit payments. For more information please visit www.uheaa.org.

**Utah Educational
Savings Plan:**

Money Magazine mentioned UESP as a low-cost college savings plan in an April 18 article. UESP's corn dog money TV campaign continues through July on stations 2, 4, and 13. UESP is co-sponsoring *The Chalk Art Festival* with the Utah Foster Care Foundation and the Gateway. UESP will feature a local artist, who will draw an education-themed piece as families collect information about saving for college. UESP now has more than \$1.5 billion in assets and nearly 75,000 accounts. Utah resident accounts continue to grow totaling nearly 18,000.