

Commissioner's Report

December 2006

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

As detailed in the Regents' General Consent Calendar, \$11.6 million in research grants have been awarded – \$6.79 million to the University of Utah and \$4.86 million to Utah State University – since the last Board meeting.

University of Utah:

The Sports Medicine Research and Testing Laboratory (SMRTL), located at the University of Utah, has joined an elite group of laboratories worldwide accredited to test Olympic, Paralympic, and other amateur and professional athletes for performance-enhancing and other prohibited drugs. SMRTL received accreditation Nov. 1 from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), making it one of two laboratories in the U.S. qualified to perform this complex analytical science.

Utah State University:

USU is the number one university in the United States when it comes to funding for space research, taking the lead over other prestigious research institutions that include Johns Hopkins University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. With more than \$54.8 million in research and development expenditures in 2004, USU ranks first among all universities in the nation in money spent on aerospace research and development, according to the most recent National Science Foundation statistics.

Weber State University:

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education has named Eric Amsel, professor and chair of Weber State University's Department of Psychology, the 2006 Utah Professor of the Year. This marks the third time in four years that Utah's professor of the year comes from WSU.

Southern Utah University:

On November 10, the Utah State Board of Regents selected Michael T. Benson as the 15th president of Southern Utah University. Benson is coming to SUU from Snow College, where he has spent the past five years leading many new initiatives for the Badgers. Benson has already been making regular visits to Cedar City to become familiar with the students, employees, campus and community prior to taking over the reins from Interim President Gregory Stauffer in January 2007. This will be the third USHE institution at which Benson has served, with several roles at University of Utah prior to his selection as Snow College president. Benson is married to the former Debi Woods and is the father of two children, Emma and Samuel. The Bensons are expecting a boy in March, which will be the first baby in the institution's current presidential residence.

Snow College:

Jeanette Langston, a student at Snow College, has been named a recipient of the 2006 Phi Theta Kappa National Dean's List Scholarship. The National Dean's List is a prestigious compilation of honor students in two-year and four-year degree programs. "The National Dean's List Scholarship rewards students who have demonstrated academic excellence and a commitment to improving their communities," explains Rod A. Pisley, Phi Theta Kappa Executive Director. "Jeanette exemplifies the outstanding students enrolled not only at Snow College, but at community colleges everywhere."

College of Eastern Utah:

The College of Eastern Utah recently held its fifth annual Career Technical Education Fair. Juniors and seniors from 10 high schools throughout Eastern Utah attended the one-day event. Nearly 400 students attended and learned about the career and educational opportunities available to them. The students were from Uintah, Duchesne, Carbon, Emery, Grand and San Juan Counties. The students traveling the greatest distance were the Intrepid Group from Navajo Mountain High, riding on a bus for more than seven hours.

Dixie State College:

Dixie State College held a ribbon-cutting November 15 for the new DSC Mobile Dental Hygiene Clinic and The Stephen and Marcia Wade Alumni House. The clinic has four operatories on board, in addition to cleaning, fluoride treatment, filling and radiographic services. It will serve Washington and Kane Counties in addressing the dental health needs of the underserved members of the community. The clinic will make visits to elementary school children, senior citizens, Paiute reservations and community health centers.

Utah Valley State College:

UVSC has engaged an economic development plan consistent with those found at other regional state institutions. Following the plan, UVSC has hosted a regional economic development summit with state and regional leaders from the Governor's Office, the Legislature, USTAR and the local community. UVSC has also hosted national economic development leaders in higher education from AASCU (American Association of State Colleges and Universities). Additionally, UVSC has recently hired two prominent regional business leaders, Steve Clark and Ken Fakler, to lead its regional SBDC, which will be located at Building L (the former WordPerfect campus), recently acquired by UVSC. Building L will also house UVSC's Culinary Arts program to better accommodate student demand.

Salt Lake Community College:

Award-winning philosopher and author Dr. Jennifer Michael Hecht spoke at the SLCC Tanner Forum on Social Ethics November 15. Dr. Hecht's "The End of the Soul: Scientific Modernity, Atheism and Anthropology" won the Phi Beta Kappa Society's 2004 prestigious Ralph Waldo Emerson Award for scholarly studies that contribute significantly to the interpretations to the intellectual and cultural condition of humanity. At SLCC, she addressed the role of doubt in the advancement of new ideas in a lecture titled "How We Come to Our Conclusions: Certainty, Doubt and Deciding."

Utah College of Applied Technology:

The Council on Occupational Education (COE) has selected UCAT President Robert O. Brems and Ogden-Weber Campus President C. Brent Wallis to fill key positions in its national organization. COE, which has its roots in regional accreditation, provides national accreditation for post-secondary technical education institutions. Six UCAT campuses have recently been granted full accreditation, with the remaining three in process this year. President Brems will serve a three-year term on the 20-member COE Commission, which functions as the governing board and decision-making body for all accreditation actions of COE. Campus President Wallis will fill a two-year term on the COE Appeal Panel.

Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority:

The popularity of UtahMentor, UHEAA's comprehensive planning-for-college Web site, continues to grow. UtahMentor set new usage records in October 2006 with 2.4 million page hits in a single month. Over 100,000 students have established a UtahMentor account. UtahMentor allows students to explore careers, plan and prepare to attend college, and view information about applying for and paying for college. UtahMentor is available at www.utahmentor.org.

Utah Educational Savings Plan:

UESP received national attention from *Money* magazine and its managing editor in an interview on the *Nightly Business Report*. UESP is cited as the 529 plan of choice. Two new TV commercials are airing. They are encouraging Utahns to sign up and use the bank withdrawal feature to make UESP contributions and encouraging Utah grandparents to set up accounts for their grandchildren. UESP now holds over 80,000 accounts valued at more than \$1.8 billion.