

Commissioner's Report

April 2007

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

As detailed in the Regents' General Consent Calendar, \$2.92 million in research grants have been awarded – \$1.36 million to the University of Utah and \$1.56 million to Utah State University – since the last Board meeting.

University of Utah:

The University of Utah is one of 10 universities to receive a \$1 million grant from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation as part of a \$10 million nationwide initiative aimed at significantly increasing college enrollment and graduation among first-generation high school students. The College Advising Corps initiative will recruit and train U seniors to work full-time as advisors for one to two years following graduation. Over the next four years, the U will develop college-advising programs at 14 target high schools around the state.

Utah State University:

Utah State University's College of Education and Human Services has again been ranked among the top tier of colleges of education in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report*. This year the college's ranking increased significantly. In its 2008 edition of "America's Best Graduate Schools," the magazine ranked the College of Education and Human Services 26th in the nation against all colleges of education. Significantly, the college was ranked second in the nation in total research dollars received by a college.

Weber State University:

Weber State University performing arts students and faculty performed "MacBeth" for two sold-out shows at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., in March. Associate Professor of Performing Arts Tracy Callahan was one of only three university directors in the nation invited to bring a Shakespeare production to the Kennedy Center stage. The performance was filmed by the Kennedy Center so it can be shared with schools across the country.

Southern Utah University:

In response to demographic trends, SUU has founded the state's first Hispanic Center for Academic Excellence on a college campus. The mission of the nascent Center is multi-faceted. The Hispanic Center for Academic Excellence plans to build strong working relationships between SUU and area Hispanics. As a long-term goal, the Center hopes to recruit more Hispanic students to study at and graduate from SUU, and to serve as a resource for those students while they are on campus. This semester, the Hispanic Center Tutor Project began sending SUU students into Iron County Schools to tutor children in the English as a Second Language programs. Further, the Center will promote research on, and the dissemination of information about, issues relating to Hispanics in Utah.

Snow College:

Snow College is home to the Traditional Building Skills Institute (TBSI). This unique program is designed to further the art of traditional building skills for the purpose of restoring and preserving historic buildings. These traditional skills can also be used in new construction. Program administrators bring in world-class craftsmen, and the hands-on workshops have received numerous

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awards and recognitions. A sampling of the topics covered in each three-day workshop at the institute include adobe restoration, blacksmithing, faux painting, stained glass, millwork, stone carving, wood furniture, and wood windows.

College of Eastern Utah:

CEU received a land donation valued at over \$1 million. The donation came from entrepreneur and businessman Marc Bingham, President and CEO of Phonebook Company Inc. The land will be the site of the new Mesozoic Gardens and eventually the new College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum. The gift includes 19 acres just outside of Price, overlooking the valley and clearly visible from Highway 6.

Dixie State College:

Dixie State College will serve as a satellite academy for the Utah Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Academy. DSC's academy, the sixth in the system, will be located at the college's Hurricane Education Center. DSC's satellite academy will provide two modules of instruction, including basic and advanced basic training, along with knowledge, skill and scenario application courses. Academy Director David Holm has noted that law enforcement across the board is looking to hire more people with degrees, and his goal is to have DSC's Academy open by the end of July.

Utah Valley State College:

Twenty-two Utah Valley State College students earned the "Gold Medal" at Utah's 2007 SkillsUSA State Competition held March 29-30 in Salt Lake City. UVSC earned the most gold and total medals (53). Students earning "gold" will represent the state and UVSC at the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Championship to be held this June in Kansas City, Missouri.

Salt Lake Community College:

SLCC was host to two Job Expos. The Utah Division of Veteran's Affairs held an event to provide veterans with important information about opportunities and benefits at the Lifetime Activities Center of the college's Redwood Campus. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, VA Medical Center, and Disabled American Veterans were among the agencies and organizations providing services. Also this month, the college held Utah's largest student-produced job fair. The SLCC Job and Career Expo featured employers from approximately 75 local and national businesses, employment trainers, and assistance organizations. The event was coordinated by Salt Lake Community College business students. Students were responsible for making all logistical arrangements as well as inviting businesses, employment agencies, and industry leaders.

Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority:

Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority has implemented a new automated telephone system which offers enhanced services for borrowers. Using the new system, borrowers can make payments and access their account information 24 hours a day. The system allows borrowers to easily transfer to a service representative at any time during UHEAA's business hours. Security safeguards have been built into the system to protect borrowers' identity and privacy. The new telephone system complements the existing 24/7 Web services (www.uheaa.org) that are also available to UHEAA customers. The telephone numbers to access the automated telephone system or to speak to a UHEAA representative in person continue to be 801-321-7294, or toll-free, 877-336-7378.

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Utah Educational Savings Plan:

UESP was recognized by *Morningstar, Inc.*, an independent investment research firm, as one of the top five college savings plans in the nation. This marks the fourth consecutive year that UESP has been rated by *Morningstar* as one of the best direct-sold 529 college savings plans in the country. In its annual rating, the firm gave high praises to UESP for its low costs, sound age-based options, and tried and true index and international offerings from Vanguard. In addition, *The Wall Street Journal* referenced the high UESP *Morningstar* rating when it noted “ The Utah Educational Savings Plan, which is run by the state, remains a top choice due to a diverse lineup of portfolios and low annual expenses...”

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