

Commissioner's Report

June 2007

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

As detailed in the Regents' General Consent Calendar, \$11.06 million in research grants have been awarded – \$7.3 million to the University of Utah and \$3.76 million to Utah State University – since the last Board meeting.

University of Utah:

University of Utah mathematician Christopher Hacon is one of five mathematicians in the U.S. to receive one of his field's top honors — the Clay Research Awards — given by the Clay Mathematics Institute for "major breakthroughs in mathematics research." Also, U Biologist Baldomero "Toto" Olivera and biochemist Brenda Bass were elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Olivera's honor stems from his search for new medicines in toxins from venomous cone snails, and Bass was honored for her research into double-stranded RNA.

Utah State University:

Utah State University's Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education and the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management are spearheading a \$3 million initiative to benefit deaf children and their families. The new educational program, a one-of-a-kind effort in the Intermountain Region, is called "Sound Beginnings of Cache Valley." As an alternative to sign language, the program will focus on helping children develop spoken language and listening skills as their primary means of communication. Advances in hearing-aid technology and cochlear implants allow many deaf children to develop language similar to their hearing peers.

Weber State University:

Weber State University Associate Zoology Professor John Cavitt received funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement a month-long survey of snowy plovers, a highly imperiled migratory bird that nests along the Great Salt Lake. The survey, which started May 7, combines the efforts of WSU faculty and students, as well as officials from several state agencies and the private sector. The project also includes collaboration with the University of Nayarit in Mexico, which is near where many Great Salt Lake snowy plovers spend the winter.

Southern Utah University:

The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) has granted Associate Membership to the Southern Utah University Department of Art and Design for its existing degrees. This places SUU in an elite group of only 262 independent schools, universities, and colleges. The Department of Art and Design is the third program in the College of Performing and Visual Arts to achieve accreditation, joining the music and dance programs. NASAD is the only national professional accrediting agency for educational institutions in the visual arts and design recognized by the United States Department of Education.

Dixie State College:

Dixie State College students joined together to provide more than 15,000 hours of service to the St. George community, Washington County and the southwestern region of Utah. The college had 22 courses or programs in which students performed some type of service this year. DSC is planning approximately 30 different service projects for next year.

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Utah Valley State College:

A year ago, UVSC launched the President's Leadership Program (PLP), which is a scholarship and residential cohort program targeting incoming freshman with strong high school academic transcripts and an interest in developing their professional leadership skills. Thirty-six students were selected for the first PLP cohort. PLP students must fulfill a combined 100 hours of required service, class and guest lecture attendance, and meetings with a chosen mentor. The program will double next year to a total of 72 students (25 returning second-year students, 47 new) from a pool of 130 applicants.

Salt Lake Community College:

Salt Lake Community College had a record number of graduates at its 2007 Commencement. The 3,065 SLCC students who received degrees, certificates, and diplomas made the 2007 graduating class SLCC's largest ever. This was an especially impressive achievement, as last year, with a smaller class, SLCC ranked seventh nationally—out of more than 1,200 community colleges—in total number of degrees awarded.

Utah College of Applied Technology:

Collette R. Mercier has been appointed campus president of UCAT's Ogden-Weber campus (OWATC), replacing the retiring founding president, C. Brent Wallis. President Mercier's many years of dedicated and successful service have been instrumental in building OWATC into one of the most successful technical colleges in the country. Having served at the campus since 1984 and as Vice President for Instructional Services for the past 13 years, President Mercier is well known and respected in the community for her leadership and advocacy of career and technical education at local and state levels. She is committed to working with OWATC's dedicated staff and with business and industry partners to meet the challenges of providing a skilled workforce head-on and to strengthen the economic viability of Weber County.

Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority:

The Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority (UHEAA) is promoting the benefits of the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) and UHEAA's Borrower Benefits programs to Utah's members of Congress. The FFELP is the target of federal legislation, which if passed, would result in a dramatic increase to the cost of borrowing for students. UHEAA Borrower Benefits programs have saved Utah student loan borrowers more than \$100 million since 1998.

Utah Educational Savings Plan:

The Utah Educational Savings Plan issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for record-keeping services. The RFP was issued to explore whether it would be beneficial to implement new technologies. There are four potential outcomes of issuing the RFP: 1) keeping the in-house record-keeping system, 2) licensing a record-keeping computer system, 3) building a record-keeping computer system, or 4) outsourcing the record-keeping functions. When reviewing responses, management will look at the total package, including costs, services, and capabilities.

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