

# Commissioner's Report

October 2007

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

As detailed in the Regents' General Consent Calendar, \$11 million in research grants have been awarded – \$6.2 million to the University of Utah and \$4.8 million to Utah State University – since the last Board meeting.

## University of Utah:

The 2007 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Mario R. Capecchi, Ph.D., distinguished professor of human genetics and biology at the University of Utah's Eccles Institute of Human Genetics and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator. The prize recognizes Capecchi's pioneering development of "knockout mice" technology, a gene-targeting technique that has revolutionized the study of mammalian biology and allowed the creation of animal models for hundreds of human diseases, including the modeling of cancers in the mouse.

## Utah State University:

Utah entrepreneur and businessman Marc Bingham and his wife, Debbie, donated \$15 million to Utah State University's Uintah Basin campus to fund construction of an Entrepreneurship and Energy Research Center. This is the largest private gift in USU's history. The building will become a state-of-the-art, high-tech educational facility to train students in business, entrepreneurship, accounting, engineering, water management, natural resources, environmental policy and other programs.

## Weber State University:

On Nov. 2, Weber State University dance professor Erik Stern will stage his dance-theater production "Demolition Derby: When the Mind Loses Its License to Drive" in New York City, in conjunction with the National Alzheimer's Association. Drawing on his parents' personal struggle with the disease, "Derby" uses dance to illustrate the effects of Alzheimer's. The performance will be videotaped by the Alzheimer's Association and used to educate people about the nature of the disease.

## Snow College:

This summer, Snow College PBL Club students attended the national competition in Chicago. Several came home as award winners. The entire club was recognized as Utah's Gold Seal Chapter, and students report that the trip was very educational – and fun.

## College of Eastern Utah:

College of Eastern Utah received two major grants this past month. The San Juan Campus received a U.S. Department of Agriculture Grant of \$315,294 for the purpose of improving and expanding its distance learning infrastructure to improve access to higher education to remote and underserved sites in southeast Utah. The grant will expand sites in Navajo Mountain, Montezuma Creek, and Monument Valley, at the Utah Navajo Health Systems in Blanding and at Dove Creek, Colorado. The Price campus also received \$107,000 in partnership with Workforce Services and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to offer short-term training to miners displaced due to the tragedy at Crandall Canyon. This money is intended to assist displaced miners and their spouses. Training is available in ten programs that are one year or less in duration.

### **Dixie State College:**

Dixie State College's Dental Hygiene program was selected for fiscal year 2007-08 State Primary Care Grants Program funding. DSC's program was awarded \$14,400 to provide dental hygiene care to the underprivileged population of Washington County.

### **Utah Valley State College:**

Benefitting from the generosity of two local family businesses, Utah Valley State College received \$21 million in donations. "Clyde Companies Inc., one of Utah's largest construction companies, announced it will donate \$1 million over the next five years to UVSC. The money, which will be matched by Ira Fulton, will be used to create the tentatively named Clyde Institute of Construction Management" (Deseret News, October 4, 2007). UVSC also "accepted a \$20 million donation to its business school — the largest gift the soon-to-be university has received to date. Family members within the Woodbury Corp. will pay the sum from the estate of Wallace Woodbury, who founded the company" (Deseret News, October 20, 2007).

### **Salt Lake Community College:**

The new Health Sciences Center at Salt Lake Community College exemplifies the college's commitment to the environment and sustainable practices. The HSC meets all requirements for national certification from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design's (LEED) Green Building Rating System. To attain LEED certification, a facility must embody a whole-building approach to sustainability in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality.

### **Utah College of Applied Technology:**

At the Utah College of Applied Technology's Bridgerland Campus (BATC) Police Academy Graduation/Commencement Exercise on October 10, 2007, 100 percent of the graduating class walked across the stage to receive their Special Function Officer, Basic Correction Officer, and/or their Law Enforcement Officer certifications in the dress uniform of the enforcement agency with which they were employed. The placement rate of BATC's Police Academy is always high, but this is the first time the entire graduating class was placed directly into the law enforcement workforce at the time of graduation.

### **Utah Educational Savings Plan:**

In September 2007, the Utah Educational Savings Plan (UESP) experienced a 51 percent growth in new accounts opened year-to-year. The growth can be attributed to nationally earned media from the Wall Street Journal, Kiplinger's, and Money magazine, as well as local outreach efforts. To date, more than 2,000 requests for additional information on UESP were received from the Back-to-School brochure campaign. Also, over 1,000 individuals visited the UESP booth at the Utah State Fair. Television commercials will resume airing at the end of October. Numerous presentations were conducted, including a presentation to Governor Huntsman and his Cabinet. The payroll deduction program continues to have a strong emphasis.

### **Utah Scholars:**

The Utah Scholars program is rapidly expanding. In FY 2007-2008, the program will expand to Ogden City, Provo, Salt Lake City, Alpine, and Washington school districts. The program is now collaborating with Utah Campus Compact to forge service-learning partnerships between USHE institutions and K-12 public schools to improve and support the academic, financial, and social preparation of high school students for postsecondary education.

**Utah Campus Compact:**

**On October 24, Utah Campus Compact constituent leaders and campus representatives gathered at Westminster College to begin the first of a series of Strategic Plan Task Force discussions focused on the theme: *A Time for Change and Boldness*. As a member of The Utah Coalition for Civic, Character and Service Learning, Utah Campus Compact will join with state government officials, civic and education leaders from around the state on October 30 for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual *Dialogue on Democracy* in support of K-16 Civic Learning and Engagement.**