

Commissioner's Report

April 2008

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

As detailed in the Regents' General Consent Calendar, \$5.8 million in grants have been awarded – \$3.5 million in research grants to Utah State University and a \$2.2 million community-based job training grant to the Davis Applied Technology College – since the last Board meeting.

University of Utah:

The University of Utah's College of Humanities recently received a generous gift of \$2.7 million from the Kendeda Foundation to launch the environmental humanities graduate program endowment. Since receiving the grant, the college has added \$1.2 million to the endowment value, bringing the total of gifts and pledges to \$3.9 million. Over the course of the next year, the college hopes to raise the additional \$1.75 million needed to fully fund the endowment and cover all programmatic costs. The endowment, when completely funded, will support 12 competitive graduate fellowships, a two-year professorship in environmental humanities, the program director, international internships for students and the ecology of residency course: a weeklong course taught each summer by noted author and environmental activist Terry Tempest Williams.

Utah State University:

The Utah State University College of Education and Human Services has moved up again in “U.S. News and World Report” magazine’s latest rankings. In the 2009 edition of “America’s Best Graduate Schools,” the magazine ranked the college 24th in the nation overall against all graduate colleges of education. Last year the college was 26th. In addition, the CEHS was ranked third in the nation in total research dollars received. The college’s Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation’s special education program ranked 20th in the nation, and the rehabilitation counseling program itself placed 15th out of the 120 programs across the United States.

Weber State University:

Weber State University assistant dental hygiene professor Kami Hanson and her students are pioneering a new technology designed to teach dental hygienists how to administer anesthesia to patients, without exposing live subjects to the pain and anesthetic of an actual injection. Hanson and her undergraduate student researchers have spent three years developing and refining a mixed-reality system that combines virtual and tactile components to provide a realistic learning experience. Hanson and her students recently presented their research at a national conference in Dallas and demonstrated the technology to the Northern Utah Dental Hygiene Association.

Southern Utah University:

About 50 SUU students went south to Sonora, Mexico for their Spring Break, but their time was not spent in swimsuits on the beach. Instead, these students went to learn about and assist in Mexico’s underserved health care system and work to improve conditions in some of the local orphanages through the Rural Health Scholars cultural immersion program. The Rural Health Scholars Program at SUU coordinates similar trips for pre-med and pre-dental students each year. The students once again performed both medical and community service while in Mexico. They delivered medical and healthcare supplies, cleaning supplies, and clothing and toys for young children. Once there, pre-dental students assisted at local schools and were able to help with dental exams and patient education. SUU’s pre-med students observed a wide variety of medical procedures and life-saving surgeries, helped care for babies in hospital nurseries, and held the hands of women going

through labor. Most importantly, these young students learned the value of compassion and empathy, and broadened their global perspective. All of the materials for the trip were donated by SUU and Cedar City communities.

Snow College:

Snow College has a new athletic director. Kevin White, quarterback of Snow's only national championship team, was named to the post recently, bringing with him a commitment to grow Snow's athletic reputation and raise the bar for student athletes. White has already secured donations to help rebuild and add lights to Badger Stadium in Ephraim.

Dixie State College:

Two aspiring Dixie State College of Utah filmmakers, Bobby Bowden and Ben Braten, will spend a week in May on the French Riviera rubbing shoulders with the world's top actors and filmmakers at the prestigious 2008 Cannes Film Festival. The 61st-annual Festival will take place May 14-25, 2008. The DSC duo was selected by the festival's committee to present their film, entitled "Through the Lens," in the Short Film Corner category, where it will be screened for distributors, studio executives, producers and professional filmmakers. Although the film is not part of a competition or up for any awards at the Festival, the pair is ecstatic about the opportunity, not only for themselves, but for the chance to showcase Utah and the Dixie State filmmaking program.

College of Eastern Utah:

Three College of Eastern Utah communication students placed first at Columbia University Scholastic Press Association's 2008 College Media Convention in New York City. Don McCarty placed first in the "black and white single advertisement for newspapers" for his "Styles to Dye For" advertisement. Scott Frederick placed first in the "first-person experience writing for newspapers" for his commentary on the CEU Prehistoric Museum artists. Josh Noyes placed first in the "cartoons portfolio of work for newspapers." Frederick also placed third in the "feature photograph portfolio of work for newspapers," while Kris Kohler received an honorable mention for "bar charts and information graphics for newspapers." Each student's award-winning work was published in CEU's "The Eagle" newspaper during the 2007 academic year.

Utah Valley State College:

The Department of Labor has awarded UVSC's mechatronics engineering technology program a Community-Based Job Training Grant in the amount of \$1,756,637 for a three-year initiative. This proposal will also generate \$169,154 in indirect funds. Additionally, the Micron Foundation, through the IM Flash Technology company, has donated \$20,000 for student scholarships in this area. The AAS degree in mechatronics prepares students to install and maintain high tech automated manufacturing systems. Automated manufacturing is an area of industry targeted by Utah Governor Jon Huntsman's plan for economic growth and development and Utah's Workforce, Education and Economic Development Alliance (WEEDA), as well as the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative.

Salt Lake Community College:

The National Council for Aid to Education has announced that Salt Lake Community College is the beneficiary of more private donations in 2007 than any other two-year college in the country. The \$26,359,143 million donated to SLCC in 2007 is more than \$9 million more than donations to the country's second most successful community college for the year.

Utah College of Applied Technology:

Twenty bright, motivated individuals will have the distinction of being part of the first class of practical nursing students to complete the new program at Mountainland Applied Technology College. Most students plan to continue their nursing education in an advanced-entry RN program under a partnership with Utah Valley State College. The practical nursing class consists of 16 women and four men.

Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority:

UtahMentor.org is UHEAA's college planning Web site that guides Utah students in preparing and paying for college. UHEAA has provided numerous college planning and financial aid access workshops for students and educators. These efforts have resulted in a large increase in Web traffic and the following milestones:

- The Web site achieved record usage with nearly 3 million hits.
- Printed materials have been given to more than 70,000 financial aid planning publications to Utah's middle and high school students.
- UHEAA staff have participated in more than 60 college and financial aid events since January 2008.

UtahMentor.org is provided free of charge by UHEAA.

Utah Educational Savings Plan:

In response to account owner requests, the Utah Educational Savings Plan (UESP) sent out a request for proposal for a FDIC-insured CD investment option. Account growth continues to increase, as more than 120,000 UESP accounts are now open. Local outreach efforts and national earned media boosted enrollment in March, with the number of Utah account owners increasing 31.3 percent year-to-year.

Utah Scholars:

On April 22, 2008 Utah Scholars will host its annual recognition banquet from 5:30-8 p.m. at the Miller Campus of Salt Lake Community College. This event, sponsored in part by Energy Solutions and Cyprus Credit Union, will recognize 244 qualifying seniors in the nine participating Utah Scholars school districts, including the Early College High Schools. Those districts include Alpine, Davis, Granite, Jordan, Park City, Ogden, Provo, Salt Lake and Washington County. Former Commissioner of Higher Education Richard E. Kendell will address the second graduating class of Utah Scholars. He will be joined by Salt Lake Community College President Cynthia Bioteau. The number of Utah Scholars recipients has grown from 160 in 2007 to 244 in 2008.

Utah Campus Compact:

The strategic planning process for the Compact has been in full swing this past month as the task force has reviewed, finalized and endorsed its plan. The plan focuses on two overarching goals: 1) Continue to advance civic engagement across our member campuses as the Utah Campus Compact (UCC) has done for the last decade; and 2) Specify the Compact's interest in coordinating efforts among member campuses to address issues of statewide importance. The issue we will pursue over the next five years will be to improve student preparation for, access to, and success in postsecondary education. The plan identifies objectives and sets of services designed to realize each objective. It stipulates that, for the Compact to work, these services must flow, not from the central office alone, but from collaborative efforts among all member campuses and the central office. In addition, the plan calls for the creation of a Steering Committee, with members representing each campus, to assist in planning and implementing the services of the Compact.