

Commissioner's Report

July 28, 2006

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

As detailed in the Regents' General Consent Calendar, \$15.9 million in research grants have been awarded – \$12.7 million to the University of Utah and \$3.2 million to Utah State University – since the last Board meeting.

University of Utah:

University of Utah Hospital, for the 13th time, has been named one of America's best hospitals by U.S. News & World Report. In its 17th survey of U.S. hospitals, the magazine ranked University Hospital No. 22 in the country in gynecology, No. 26 in orthopedics, and No. 34 in cancer care in the 2006 list of best hospitals. Only 176 of the country's more than 6,000 hospitals met the criteria for selection on this year's list, according to the magazine.

Utah State University:

Ned M. Weinshenker, director of the Life Sciences Cluster in the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development, fills a restructured position at Utah State University as Vice President for Strategic Ventures and Economic Development. Weinshenker holds a doctorate in organic chemistry and has broad experience in start-up and development of multiple companies in the pharmaceutical industry. He looks forward to furthering Utah State University's co-leadership role with the University of Utah in developing opportunities for technology commercialization.

Weber State University:

Weber State University recently hosted two outreach programs designed to encourage underserved secondary school students to consider higher education opportunities. Fifty high school students from the Ogden City School District attended the inaugural Summer College Summit Program. During the three-day event, students lived on campus and took part in college-preparatory workshops and activities. Another 30 high school students participated in the Health Careers Opportunities Program at WSU, a six-week program that offered students a chance to learn more about health care careers through classes, interactive workshops and field trips.

Southern Utah University:

This week, Southern Utah University and Bryce Canyon National Park signed a document that creates an Alliance for Education. This partnership agreement officially proclaims numerous joint efforts to enhance the learning opportunities for the employees of each organization and the people they serve. The experiential learning opportunities for SUU students and employees will greatly increase with this agreement. Students will now serve many varied and meaningful internships at the park. Additionally, the park will host various retreats, training seminars and workshops while Bryce Canyon personnel will be able to take advantage of library and faculty resources of the university. This agreement will stretch the resources of both entities farther and create long-term relationships that will benefit many southern Utah communities.

Snow College:

Several Snow College faculty are furthering their professional development this summer. Dr. Gary Parnell, professor of philosophy and education, has spent the summer working for the Navy teaching English aboard a U.S. guided missile cruiser in the Indian Ocean. Dr. Boyd Beck, professor of chemistry, and several colleagues are piloting a biodiesel plant. Vance Larsen and Scott Wilson, faculty members in the music department, recently hosted a jazz jam camp and are ready to welcome the second annual "Juilliard Goes to the Mountains" camp, which features faculty members from the Juilliard School of Music.

College of Eastern Utah:

The College of Eastern Utah finalized the purchase of the Willow Creek Mine Property in Price Canyon at the end of June. The final purchase price was \$1.1 million. Immediately, the buildings were prepared for use as the home of the new College of Eastern Utah Western Energy Training Center. The partners in this venture are the College of Eastern Utah, Workforce Services, Southeast Applied Technology College, and Southeast Utah Energy Producers Association which includes representatives of mining, oil and gas, trucking, energy generation, and related retail industries.

Dixie State College:

Dr. Jerry Harris, Director of Paleontology at Dixie State College, was recently part of a trio of a joint Chinese-American team of scientists that unearthed dozens of fossils in northwestern China that provide some rare clues about the evolution of modern birds from their prehistoric dinosaurian ancestors. The discovery is being called the "missing link in bird evolution" and was recently the subject of an article in the journal Science. Most notably, the scientists have discovered approximately 40 well-preserved fossils of the ancient bird *Gansus yumenensis* that date back approximately 110 million years to the Early Cretaceous period. The fossils reveal that *Gansus* is the oldest known member of the Ornithurae – the group that includes all modern birds and their closest extinct relatives.

Utah Valley State College:

Val Hale has been named the new Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Marketing for Utah Valley State College. Hale brings to the role a vast experience in fund raising and marketing. His success at BYU in building the identity of the athletic program, raising millions of dollars, and in marketing their programs is impressive. In addition, Hale has done a wonderful job enhancing UVSC's community relations program, economic development initiatives, and in moving the institution towards university status for the past two years. Additionally, Dr. Bradley Cook, Vice President of Academic Affairs for Utah Valley State College, has accepted a position as President at the Higher Colleges in the United Arab Emirates. Dr. Karl Worthington will fill the role of Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs while a national search is conducted for a permanent replacement.

Salt Lake Community College:

The National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses reports that for the period of January through March 2006, Salt Lake Community College received the highest percentage of those who passed in the quarter and in the state.

Utah College of Applied Technology:

On July 1, 2006, Southwest Campus (SWATC) of the Utah College of Applied Technology began an Automotive Technology program. With Southern Utah University's (SUU) decision to phase out its Automotive Technology associate's degree program, SWATC and SUU worked closely to ensure that the training would still be available in the region. SWATC was able to hire the two experienced instructors previously employed by SUU, and has worked out an agreement to continue using the SUU auto facility for the next two years. Students will have the option of earning the UCAT Certificate of Completion. SWATC plans to mobilize components of the automotive technology program to help deliver the instruction to students in the campus' rural counties.

Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority:

UHEAA managed record telephone and student loan application volume in June 2006 as borrowers rushed to consolidate their student loans before the July 1, 2006 deadline when interest rates rose nearly 2 percent to a six-year high of 7.14% for variable rate, in-repayment loans. By applying for a consolidation loan before July 1, borrowers could lock in a lower rate for the life of the loan and combine their separate loans into a single consolidation loan, saving thousands of dollars in interest costs. UHEAA received nearly 9,000 consolidation applications in the month of June and answered more than 36,000 telephone calls, nearly two-and-a-half times normal call volume. On June 30, 2006, the last day before the interest rates increased, UHEAA set new volume records for a single day by receiving more than 1,600 online applications and 3,900 calls. UHEAA also accommodated over 500 walk-in customers at The Gateway offices on June 30, 2006.

Utah Educational Savings Plan:

UESP continues to grow due to favorable national press coverage and local outreach efforts. UESP now has more than \$1.5 billion in assets and over 76,000 accounts.

UESP updated its tri-fold brochure and poster to match the new "Corndog Money" brand and is distributing them to employers and other audiences. UESP also created a brochure for inclusion in new baby packets at Utah hospitals and distributed about 3,000 of them to the University of Utah hospital and participating IASIS hospitals. UESP evaluated the 2005-2006 media plan and found that all goals were exceeded, although the entire budget was not expended:

Goal Increase number of Utah resident account owners by 10 percent, 684 accounts.
Result Increased by 22 percent, adding nearly 1500 new account owners.

Goal Decrease median age for new beneficiaries by 6 months.
Result Median age decreased by 9 months.

Goal Increase information packet requests by 10 percent, or 684 accounts
Result Increased requests by 27 percent, or nearly 2,000 requests.