

USU Continues Trajectory of Record Research Funding

Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016



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Setting a trend now of three years in a row, Utah State University has achieved another record year of research support — more than \$240 million. That's an all-time high for Utah State, up 4.7 percent in awards over last year's record.

Among USU's 10 peer institutions designated by the board of trustees, only two others saw research expenditures increase last year. In fact, five of the past 10 years have seen record research funding at USU, an impressive feat during some of the most economically challenging times of the past century.

More than one-third of USU's revenues come from research funding, with almost three-quarters of that coming from competitive federal sponsors outside the state. This formula of using faculty productivity to bring in external funding is vital to continuing to offset other revenue sources, namely, state appropriations and student tuition.

Much of last year's new growth is thanks to USU's Space Dynamics Laboratory (SDL), which brought in nearly \$100 million. SDL researchers designed, built and tested detector electronics assemblies for the NASA spacecraft, OSIRIS-REx, which launched this summer and will be the first U.S. mission to extract samples from an asteroid.

This type of growth is expected to continue, as SDL just signed a \$99 million contract with the Department of Defense to develop space-based sensor platforms for the Missile Defense Agency.

One of USU's largest research grants of last year is in conjunction with the national GEAR-UP program. The \$32.8 million grant will help more than 3,000 Utah middle schoolers catch the vision of higher education — and then make the dream come true through tutoring, counseling and college campus visits.

The program provides assistance over seven years through partnerships with eight school districts, two charter schools, three corporations, two USU colleges, the Ute Indian Tribe, USU's Access and Diversity Center, Hill Air Force Base and the Utah NASA Space Consortium.

In addition to these awards, five new faculty members were selected to join 11 other USU researchers with active five-year CAREER grants. These researchers study quantum topology, improving engineering education, creating intelligent water supplies and combating the sinister side of crowdsourcing.

Other impressive grant recipients are Brian Higginbotham, who was awarded \$1.2 million to help provide educational marriage and relationship resources to at-risk youth, newlyweds, fathers and stepfathers, Jim Evans, whose \$186,000 grant will go toward collecting and analyzing samples from the San Andreas fault, as well as educating about earthquake geology, physics, scientific drilling and coring and Stephen Whitmore who will lead a student team in the further development and integration of an air data sensing system on Sierra Nevada Corporation's Dream Chaser, a crewed orbital spacecraft designed to provide reliable commercial transportation for crew and cargo to the international space station.

"These few projects are part of a vast portfolio of USU research that continues to affect the lives of Utahns and is vital in generating critical solutions and providing significant research opportunities for graduate students and undergraduate researchers," said Mark McLellan, vice president for research and dean of graduate studies at USU.

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