July 21, 2010

To: Henry Yang, Chancellor

From: Michael Witherell, Vice Chancellor for Research

Subject: Extramural funding for sponsored projects

I am pleased to send you a brief annual report on the extramural support for research and other activities at UC Santa Barbara. The academic year 2009-10 was a record year by every measure of research funding.

The total funding awarded to sponsored projects at UCSB in 2009-10, from July 1 to June 30, was a record $222 million. This is an increase of 28% over last year's total of $174 million, and represents a doubling of extramural funding over the last ten years.

This dramatic increase in extramural funding is mostly due to increased funding from the federal research agencies. We received $192 million in federal funding in 2009-10, of which $67 million came from the National Science Foundation. Each of these numbers is about 30% greater than the previous record year, which was 2008-09.

These record funding levels can be linked directly to the effect of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), from which we received about $40 million. These ARRA funds were awarded through extremely competitive programs run by federal research agencies. In fact, $35 million of the ARRA funds awarded to UCSB came from two agencies, the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Office of Science within the Department of Energy (DOE).

The single largest research grant was the $15.7 million awarded to the Institute for Energy Efficiency (IEE) to establish the Center for Energy-Efficient Materials (CEEM). John Bowers is Director of both IEE and CEEM, which was funded by the DOE Office of Science as one of their Energy Frontier Research Centers. The goal of CEEM is to make breakthroughs in the fundamental science and engineering behind three of the most promising technologies in the energy sector: photovoltaics, thermoelectrics, and solid-state lighting. This funding coming to UCSB is part of a $19 million award to CEEM, supporting an ambitious research program that will extend to 2014.

UCSB faculty have also done well at competing for support for research in areas that receive very little federal support, like the humanities. Patricia Fumerton of the English Department received a third two-year grant of $315,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the English Broadside Ballad Archive. This represents a very large commitment by the agency, about 1% of the total amount it gives annually in direct research grants nationwide.
I would like to call special attention to how well our assistant professors are competing for research funding early in their academic career. In the year 2009-10, assistant professors in science and engineering received seven Faculty Early Career Development awards from the NSF. The Foundation describes these awards as the “most prestigious awards in support of the early career-development activities of those teacher-scholars who most effectively integrate research and education.” Over the last six years, a larger fraction of our assistant professors in science and engineering have won these awards than those from any university in the country, with the exception of MIT, who did just as well. We are still attracting the best and brightest to come build their career at UC Santa Barbara. This is a wonderful indicator that the quality of UCSB research will continue to be very high for the foreseeable future.

Although this surge in research funding gives an enormous boost to research programs at UCSB, it has represented a large increase in the workload for all the people who administer research activity on campus. Not only are there more proposals to submit and more budgets to keep track of, but we are required to track all the ARRA funds at a level of detail that is unprecedented. I would like to thank all the people in departments, research institutes, and the central offices that oversee research grants for their heroic efforts.

The attached charts and the tabulated data used to make them are available on the Office of Research Web site at http://research.ucsb.edu/pubs/research_statistics.shtml.

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