

Research, projects at WSU enrich the educational experience

BY CHRIS MILLARD

Guest commentary

Weber State University is gearing up for a new school year. Classes are filling, textbooks are stocked on the shelves of the bookstore and, yes, parking passes have been sold. Every August, when faculty and students return to the university, the campus is charged with excitement, anticipating a new year of study, learning, exploring and research.

Research at WSU does not mean clinical drug trials nor launching payloads into space.

WSU research is focused on enriching the undergraduate experience, preparing future graduate students, and enhancing student and faculty scholarship. Our faculty continuously study, publish and explore in their disciplines, always creating new ways to teach Utah's brightest students.

A university education involves more than reading textbooks and listening to lectures. WSU students are involved in community service/learning projects and internships, as well as many hands-on learning experiences where they work with peers, faculty and future employers.

Our students deserve opportunities for fieldwork where they can conduct distinctive and highly memorable learning experiences. However, in this time of shrinking financial resources, our challenge is to fund these exciting and innovative university learning opportunities.

As a state institution, we look to the state of Utah as well as student tuition to

support our classroom and learning activities. At the same time, we recognize the compelling constraints on legislative dollars, and the competing needs



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for every department in state government. Therefore, WSU seeks funding from outside the institution in order to finance

some of our most dynamic and innovative programs, through the WSU Office of Sponsored Projects.

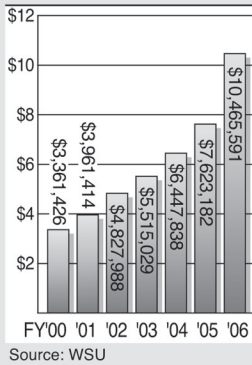
OSP assists faculty as they write proposals to agencies supporting the kinds of technical work they are conducting. Furthermore, the office safeguards the university in its contractual relationships, ensuring that federal regulations are rigorously followed. These sound business practices guarantee that outside dollars are well-spent.

Freed from the need to personally worry about audits and financial management, faculty have responded by engaging in the writing process, with dramatic success.

In 2001, the total dollars managed at WSU for sponsored projects was \$3.3 million. In June of this year WSU reached \$10.4 million, tripling the total dollars for externally funded projects in five years. How has this remarkable increase happened? Simply put, more professors are writing proposals, and more professors are being funded from federal government, state government and private

WSU projects

WSU dollars in millions in sponsored projects, Fiscal Years 2000-06:



Source: WSU

Standard-Examiner

sources.

External money is flowing to WSU for things such as a sophisticated microscope for the Department of Zoology, a summer camp for underserved children to learn about health professions, and a compact micro-imaging spectrometer for astrobiology. WSU is funded by agencies such as the National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Education, National Aeronautics and Space Administration and U.S. Department of Environmental Quality.

We are studying such things as the history of Chinese films, archaeological investigations at the Elkhorn Mountains, blood exposure for home health care nurses, and numerical models to predict the visible and near-infrared spectra of terrestrial type planets orbiting other stars. One award provides the opportunity for students to do internships at businesses in foreign countries. Another award

supports exhibits at our art gallery.

Yet another provides the opportunity to study the impact of fatigue for shift workers in medical professions and law enforcement. These and many more programs strengthen the university, bringing national attention and recognition for our students.

Most of our students graduate to live and work on the Wasatch Front. They are the nurses, teachers, accountants, salespeople, government officials and other professionals who

are the backbone of our community.

Many WSU grads are accepted to graduate programs here and across the country.

They become lawyers, doctors, dentists and business owners, and some become our future professors. Our students are second to none.

WSU is ready for a new school year. We are prepared to make every class academically exciting and intellectually stimulating. Our professors are committed to continuing our history

of teaching and learning excellence. We will look for more ways to creatively meet the educational needs of our academic community for today and for the future. We will continue to write proposals and seek funding for worthy projects to make education more vibrant and alive for WSU. We look forward to another great year for students and faculty alike. Indeed, August is our favorite month of the year.

Millard is the director of the WSU Office of Sponsored Projects.