

Illustrating the economic importance of scientific research recognized in the myregion.org Regional Resolves, Central Florida's largest university, the University of Central Florida, enjoyed a record year in 2006-07 in outside grant funding.

UCF Researchers Received Record \$121.4 Million in Funding in 2006-07

Researchers at the University of Central Florida received a record \$121.4 million in outside grant funding in the 2006-07 fiscal year. Double-digit percentage increases in education, engineering, optics and simulation contributed significantly toward the overall 18 percent increase over last year's funding.

The 2006-07 fiscal year marks the third consecutive year in which UCF researchers have surpassed \$100 million in research funding. They collected \$104.4 million in 2005-06.

Research funding is often perceived as an indicator of the quality of a university's research. At UCF, that is especially true because several of the large grants that researchers received were extremely competitive, said M.J. Soileau, UCF's vice president for Research and Commercialization.

"UCF researchers routinely compete with their peers at the nation's top research universities for federal project funding," Soileau said. "Increasingly, UCF scientists are the ones being funded."

For example, Eduardo Salas, a Psychology professor and scientist at the Institute for Simulation and Training (IST), received \$1 million a year from the Office of Naval Research for a five-year project on how team members process information to develop a shared understanding of their tasks. The research aims to help the military better coordinate rescues of missing aid workers and other complex missions.

The project began in 2006 with a theoretical study and will continue this fall with experiments on how team members' understanding is affected by command and control.

By drawing upon experts in Psychology, Philosophy, Computer Science and Engineering, the project is exactly the type of multidisciplinary work that helped IST increase its research funding to \$14 million, a 72 percent increase over the previous year.

"Over a three-year period, we augmented our research resources and sought increased collaboration with other UCF units, other universities and potential partners outside the academic community," said Randall Shumaker, director of IST. "These initiatives provided the opportunity to produce more proposals and compete for larger, more comprehensive efforts that we could not have hoped to accomplish alone."

UCF researchers received \$57 million from federal government agencies, \$32.3 million from state agencies and \$32 from industries and corporations in the 2006-07 fiscal year, which concluded June 30.

The College of Engineering and Computer Science attracted \$20.9 million in funding, largely as a result of recruiting and retaining faculty who aggressively pursue grants, said Debra Reinhart, professor and executive associate dean.

Engineering projects included \$957,000 received from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection by Ni-Bin Chang and Martin Wanielista, professors of Civil and Environmental Engineering, for the development and testing of wastewater treatment systems for removing nutrients from septic tanks. Nutrients encourage algae plant growth in some water systems where it can be harmful, Wanielista said. One of those nutrients, nitrogen, has been shown to cause health problems in children.

In another collaborative project, Assistant Professor Richard Eastes of the Florida Space Institute and Professor James Harvey of the College of Optics and Photonics received \$1 million from NASA to design an ultraviolet imaging spectrometer that would give scientists a better view of how space weather affects the earth.

The College of Education led all UCF colleges and institutes with \$21.1 million in research funding in 2006-07. Much of that total came from state programs focused on teaching reading and literacy. Federally funded projects include \$403,000 received by associate professors Lee Cross and Lynn Hartle to train specialists to work with families of infants and toddlers and \$418,000 received by Professor Wilfred Wienke and Project Director Cynthia Pearl to train teachers to work with autistic children.

The College of Optics and Photonics received \$16.1 million, including \$4.5 million to establish a state center of excellence in advanced laser technology. The Townes Laser Institute was dedicated in May.

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