

# Generating External Funding for Research at CSUF

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This paper presents an overview of part of our presentation to the Academic Senate/Academic Affairs Forum on August 18, 2009. Comments are organized under the following headings:

- 1) *Benefits of Funded Research*
- 2) *What Can the University do to Improve its Record of External Grant Funding?*
- 3) *Update on Generating External Funding for Research at CSUF*

## **1) Benefits of Funded Research**

The benefits of funded research programs are enormous and can extend to all aspects of the university – to students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community. Examples are:

- *Increases university resources* --provides millions of additional dollars to campus each year that supports faculty research, student assistants, community outreach, laboratory development, travel, equipment, and supplies.
- *Enriches student learning* – student involvement in research and grant-writing promotes higher-level problem solving, creative thinking, and analytical skills that are so important to students' success as future professionals, scientists, and community leaders.
- *Facilitates higher quality research* –external funding makes it possible to study problems of greater depth, breadth, and significance.
- *Promotes faculty vitality and currency in the field*—after receiving their doctorate degrees, most faculty are enthusiastic about their research agendas and are motivated to remain active and engaged in their disciplines, something that is increasingly difficult without released time from four-course teaching loads.
- *Contributes to higher quality, state-of-the-art research equipment and laboratories.* Although the CSU mission has been amended to mandate faculty involvement in research, scholarship, and creative activity (California State Education Code: Chapter 1587), funding formulas for the CSU provide insufficient funds to support high quality faculty/student research (research allocation to CSU is currently equivalent to approximately \$5.50 per student).
- *Improves faculty recruitment* – new PhDs seek positions in active, research-supportive environments where they can collaborate with engaged colleagues to write grants and study important questions in their fields -- and can serve as mentors to students in the same way they were mentored.
- *Provides additional jobs for staff/students/part-time faculty*—most externally funded research projects require the hiring of additional personnel.

- *Prepares students for admission to doctoral programs*—prior research experience with respected faculty mentors is a requirement for admission to most competitive doctoral programs.
- *Enhances university reputation and chances for additional funding*—funding agencies like to fund projects and proposals from institutions with proven records of success.
- *Provides economic/social benefits to community*—numerous reports (e.g., Role of Research and Creativity in the CSU, 2006; Access to Excellence, 2008) show that research of CSU faculty provides many benefits to the community – it assists state planners, improves quality of life, contributes to the economy, and develops new concepts in all areas of life.
- *Improves student retention*—student participation in research is a form of active learning which leads to improved learning and better retention rates.
- *Enhances alumni pride* – increases motivation to give back to university.

## **2) What Can the University Do to Improve its Record of External Funding?**

For the reasons presented above, pursuing funded research ought to be among the *highest of university priorities* both now (during furloughs and budget cuts) and during normal economic times. State funding for the CSU never has been and most likely never will be sufficient to support its dual teaching/research mission. In recent years, Cal State Fullerton has made progress in improving its external grant record, but lags behind most comparable institutions in the CSU, currently ranking 10<sup>th</sup> (up from 15<sup>th</sup> four years ago), falling behind San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Fresno, Long Beach, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, Sacramento, and Northridge.

Although Fullerton's relatively young age compared to other CSUs is considered a limitation in philanthropic fund-raising due to a smaller alumni base and less-developed community connections, there is little reason why this same logic should apply to research-related funding. The educational background, professional expertise, and other qualifications of Fullerton faculty and staff surely are as strong (or stronger) than faculty and staff at sister institutions.

In comparing CSUF with similar CSUs, evidence suggests that Fullerton's less-than-stellar grant funding record may be related to its less-than-stellar infrastructure and support for faculty research. In other words, it appears that CSUF may need to *'invest more to get more'* if an increase in externally funded research is a goal.

Using CSU Long Beach as a comparison institution for Fullerton, since it is similar in size, in geographic location, and often competes for the same faculty and students, it is clear that CSULB has a much better record of grant funding and that it provides a much higher level of support for faculty research and proposal-writing. As seen in the table below, Long Beach has double the number of faculty serving as PIs on grant projects (16% vs 8%) and receives more than double the amount of external funding compared to Fullerton (\$37.2 million vs \$17.1 million, based on 2007-08 Annual Reports from CSUF and CSULB). Long Beach also invests considerably more resources in support of faculty research and grant-writing. In 07-08 they awarded \$1.3 million in intramural grants to 137 of its faculty, while Fullerton awarded \$193,786 in intramural awards to 69 faculty members.

In addition, Long Beach has a higher level of administrative and staff support for research. Similar to most large CSUs, it has an AVP for Research and External Support whose major focus is to provide vision and support for faculty research and grant writing and to oversee the University Research Office. Although Fullerton does not have a dedicated AVP for Research, it has made positive changes in this direction by recently adding ‘research oversight’ to the duties and titles of two existing positions on campus. The AVP position which oversees graduate programs and accreditation now also has responsibility for research, as does the Director of the Center for Internships and Community Engagement. The fact that Fullerton has a lower level of resource support for external grants relative to its size is a major reason why our federal Facilities and Administration reimbursement rate (IDC rate) is lower than that of other CSUs and why it was recently reduced even further from 39.5 to 35.1% (compared to Long Beach’s rate of 43.5%). This is unfortunate, since it puts Fullerton in a downward spiral with respect to resources available to support research and proposal-writing, but further illustrates the need for *spending money to get money*.

**Comparison of External Research Funding and Grant Support for CSULB and CSUF  
(per 2007-08 Annual Reports)**

	<b>CSU – Long Beach</b>	<b>CSU – Fullerton</b>
External Grant Awards	\$37.2 million	<b>\$17.1 million</b>
# of tenured/tenure track faculty that are grant PIs	137 (16%)	<b>56 (8%)</b>
Intramural Awards Program	271 awards to faculty (\$1.3 million)	<b>69 awards to faculty (\$193,786)</b>
Administrative Support	AVP position fully dedicated to faculty research and grant support	<b>AVP with responsibility for graduate programs, accreditation, and research</b>
Pre/Post Award Staff Support	Difficult to quantify, but size of CSULB staff appears to be about double that of CSUF	
Federally Approved Facilities & Admin. Reimbursement Rate (IDC Rate)	CSULB = 43.5%	<b>CSUF = 35.1% (reduced from 39.5% due to decline in grant support)</b>

On a positive note, Academic Affairs’ added emphasis on grant-writing and research over the past couple of years (including modifying the job descriptions referred to above and extra effort by OGC) has been accompanied by an increase in grant awards this year (up \$2.5 million over the previous year) and an increase in number of new proposals being submitted. Also, President Gordon and the PRBC are to be applauded for giving priority this year to M&G initiatives that have potential to bring increased external funding to the campus for research and other programs. This is sure to have a positive influence on the number of grant proposals submitted in the near future and on the amount of funding generated.

However, it is very important that any further increase in proposal submissions be accompanied by an increase in pre-award and post-award staff support. All involved in the proposal-writing

process at Fullerton agree that additional support for proposal preparation and submissions, as well as post-award management, has to occur before the campus can move forward in its goal to increase external funding. As is, the current shortage of support staff in the Office of Grants and Contracts (OGC) is causing a bottleneck in the processing of proposals and getting them submitted in an accurate and timely manner. All involved in submitting grant proposals over recent months (and many of us have been) agree that Fullerton has reached a 'glass ceiling' in terms of the number of proposals that can be submitted and managed on this campus with its current level of support. Although the OGC has talented and dedicated staff, most are 'maxed out' in the level of service they can provide to faculty in assisting with proposal preparation and submissions and, in fact, during much of the past year have been over-extended to the point of having stress issues and making serious errors in proposal budget preparation and in electronic submissions. This has caused missed deadlines for completed proposals and great disappointment for faculty who have worked hard to write proposals, as well as embarrassment to the university when proposals are submitted incorrectly, are late, and/or include incorrect budget information.

#### Specific Recommendations for Increasing Support for Funded Research at CSUF:

- **Provide dual-reporting, college-based grant coordinators in colleges with a high level of grant activity (similar to the DOD model in University Advancement).**  
There is wide-spread agreement that this would be the single best way of improving infrastructure support for faculty research and grant-writing and also would aid OGC and ASC with their work. This individual, with expertise in college-related disciplines, would search out and help identify relevant proposal opportunities, would establish personal relations with granting agencies in Washington DC, would assist faculty in writing grants proposals, would be trained to assist OGC in budget preparation and electronic proposal submission, and could assist ASC with project reports.
- **Increase the amount of intramural support for faculty research – both the number of awards given and size of awards.** The maximum size of intramural awards (\$5,000) has not changed in 30 years. At the same time, with an increase in size of award, greater accountability should be built in for demonstrating outcomes– e.g., external grant proposals submitted, articles published, etc.
- **As soon as resources permit, establish an AVP position dedicated to the promotion of faculty research and grant-writing. Fill vacant position in OGC.**

### **3) Update on Generating External Funding for Research at CSUF**

President Gordon and the Planning, Resources and Budget Committee (PRBC) are in agreement on the need to stimulate research and external grant funding as state funding per student decreases. PRBC recommended a three-year plan to increase funding for research and increase our external funding. In the first year, PRBC recommended an additional staff position for the Office of Grants and Contracts (OGC), additional funding for intramural grants so that more faculty can receive funding, and to replace the state intramural funds that we lost due to the budget cuts. Funding a grant writer, providing additional intramural funds so that the maximum award could be raised to \$10,000 and replacing state intramural funds, if necessary, were recommended for year two. Third year recommendations focused on fully funding positions in

OGC so that more IDC funds can be returned to the Departments and continuing to replace state intramural funds, if necessary. President Gordon has announced that he will fund PRBC's year one recommendations and has agreed to fund a grant writer in the first year as well.



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