

Notes from the VPR

October 12, 2018



The new fiscal year has started with exciting news for our research community. In September, Dr. Peterson received the 2018 BioMed SA Award for Innovation in healthcare and Bioscience, and last week, we held the [topping-out ceremony](#) for the new Sam & Ann Barshop Institute for Longevity & Aging Studies, one of the pinnacle research institutes in the nation. Our sponsored research programs have reached a new high totaling **\$79.8 million in NIH funding, a remarkable 30% increase**

compared to FY17. Naturally these achievements engender optimism, however, the biomedical research community is facing several challenges that require close monitoring, as well as, new approaches and solutions, several covered in this issue.

With strong bipartisan support in Congress, the NIH budget has been on an upward trajectory for the past four years. The recent \$2B boost for FY19 represents a 5.4% increase. However, these funds are largely earmarked to high priority research areas defined in the 21st Century Cures Act (Beau Biden Cancer Moonshot, BRAIN Initiative, and the Precision Medicine Initiative's All of Us Research Program), rather than distributed proportionately across the entire NIH portfolio. We also need to keep in mind, that when adjusted for inflation, the [NIH budget has actually declined by approximately 20% since 2003](#).

The increasing cost of education, difficulties in securing federal funding, and the growing distrust of scientific opinions alimented by the polarization of the political debate, are factors discouraging many students to consider pursuing a career in science. This complex scenario illustrates the fragile state of the biomedical research ecosystem. Indeed, it takes many years of hard work to build a lab and its reputation, survive in a hypercompetitive environment, balance work and personal life, and fend multiple challenges on different fronts (animal rights activism, growing regulatory burden, foreign influence in U.S. funded research).

As scientists, there are actions that we need to take to educate the general public about the NIH's mission, the correlation between grant awards and improved health, and the significant impact that the [biosciences workforce has on the U.S. economy](#). Social media communication is an effective approach to gain the attention of members of Congress. Leading professional organizations, including the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) (AAAS) and the [Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology](#) (FASEB) provide guidance and online tools on how to influence the national dialogue on science policy. As highlighted in this issue, our office often uses social media platforms to raise the visibility of our research enterprise.

Because our *raison d'être* is to educate and train biomedical professionals, promote research and scholarly activities to advance knowledge, and develop new therapies and interventions that improve health and quality of life, our institution continues to invest in resources to impact the workforce of our region and the research community at large. In collaboration with the Office of the President, we provide incentives for faculty who currently hold or submit T32 training grants. This program has significantly increased the number of T32 submissions leading to an all-time high of [9 active awards](#). Also, the newly reviewed Clinical & Translational Science Award has two key workforce training components: the TL1, providing interdisciplinary research and mentorship in translational science to doctoral students, and the KL2, a two-year research mentorship for junior faculty committed to pursuing a research career as an independent scientist.

Following our institution's core values, we intend to convey in each newsletter our commitment to a research environment built on integrity, teamwork, and transparency. In this issue, you will find important updates about a new Policy to guide the services offered by the Institutional Research Labs, a brief overview of the [F18 F&A \(Facilities and Administrative cost reimbursements\) FY18](#) allocations to the VPR Office, and some new events that will foster collaborations among our "community of scholars and innovators".

Andrea



[Conversations on Science & Art](#) provides a networking opportunity for faculty, staff, students, and the external community to explore the creative intersection of both disciplines.



Dr. Randy Glickman and Mr. Scheel share a moment studying artist Cody Vance's alabaster artwork, *Big Bang*.