

SCIENCES UPDATE

October 2002

From the College of Sciences, San Diego State University

We have reformatted Sciences Update as a brief summary of the state of the College and notice of upcoming events.

San Diego State University is well into its 106th year, one marked by unprecedented popularity among applicants, unparalleled scientific distinction within the CSU system, yet tarnished by declining state support that has forced us to turn in just one year from an aggressive to a defensive financial posture.

SDSU received more than 41,000 applications for 6,650 places in the incoming class this year. I have heard it said that this is the second largest number of applicants to any university in the U.S., and perhaps this was a factor in SDSU's being named a "hot and trendy" university by U.S. News and World Report—a dubious distinction until one sees the other universities on the list, which are those to whose levels of distinction we would normally aspire. Throughout the difficult admissions process, we continued our willing obligation to serve the San Diego community by admitting a substantial cohort from our service area (S.D. County south of route 56, plus Imperial County), in addition to a slightly larger number from beyond it. The credentials of those who matriculated are at record highs, and the remediation needs at record lows.

There are just over 34,000 students on campus. We made a concerted effort to reduce the number of bodies from the impacted levels of last year, and were successful. But to our delight, this year's students have increased their course loads, so that each person comes much closer to being a "Full Time Equivalent Student," (15 credits) which is how enrollment is actually counted by the state. The net effect is that our FTES actually increased. Thus we have performed the extracorporeal feat of having fewer bodies, but more students on campus.

This outcome is ideal. Having fewer bodies, and a commensurate decrease in the number of cars needed to transport them, reduces the load on our infrastructure—traffic, parking (though it seems all 14,000 spots are taken anyway), food, housing, library, etc. But the increased FTES means that students are more likely to graduate, and to do so more quickly, and should also translate into greater funding from the state, if only the state were in a position to respond.

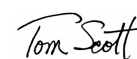
Evidence for unparalleled scientific distinction comes in many forms, from honors to our faculty and students to comments I hear from other CSU science deans, who marvel at what SDSU has achieved in research under the leadership of my predecessors. Most pointedly, our scientific achievements are manifested in two numbers gleaned from the year just past: (1) our faculty and students published 368 refereed articles and chapters, a mean of 1.93 per faculty, which matches up well against the standards for major research universities; (2) in the sternest test of all—where our nation chooses to invest its research resources—our faculty won \$29.7 million in funding from outside the university. This translates to a stunning \$155,000 per person, or double the typical faculty salary. Some of these funds go for equipment, but the majority pays the salaries of graduate students and technicians, and so is inserted into the San Diego economy. Funded research is how we build our scientific reputation and how we are able to remain solvent despite a local environment that is slim on resources.

The monstrous fly in this ointment is the state budget. Even with Governor Davis proclaiming his relative protection of education, we are still anticipating a major post-election cut in 2002-03, and worse yet for 2003-04. Last year we hired 20 new faculty into the College of Sciences; this year 18. In the coming year we are hoping for nine, not even enough to replace our losses let alone to serve those increasing FTES. We will protect our core mission to our undergraduate students through this funding trough, but we must also minister to the more vulnerable graduate and research agendas that were built with such effort and that bring us such distinction. Our parallel efforts are to preserve what is precious during lean years, and to plan for growth when we emerge from them.

These messages come to a relatively engaged subset of you—our COS alumni—every six months or so. We are exploring the possibility of sending the College's Sciences Messenger, a semimonthly briefing of COS news and issues, to those for whom we have reliable e-mail addresses. It's a quick read (1-2 minutes) and a good way of maintaining contact. We'll learn over the next few weeks whether this is a possibility, but in the meantime, please send us your e-mail addresses for our records.

Finally, I am relieved to note that, half-way through my third football season at SDSU, I witnessed the first home victory (over Utah) last night. I quarterbacked a team that tasted victory only infrequently in the 1960s, and have a sense of how exhilarated Adam Hall and Tom Craft must be feeling this morning.

I look forward to hearing from you and to establishing closer contact. Feel free to send comments, news or questions to: mbrown@sciences.sdsu.edu



Dean

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **October 26, 2002** UNLV vs SDSU, Dean's reception (by invitation)
- **November 16, 2002** College of Sciences Inner Space/Outer Space Exhibit and Open House
- **March 2003** SDSU month in San Diego; SDSU's role in enriching S.D. will be highlighted
- **March 29, 2003** Spring celebration at Santa Margarita Field Station
- **May 2nd, 2003** Sciences Benefactors' dinner at the Dean's home

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