

To: All Faculty

From: Andrés G. Gil, Vice President for Research

Date: September 6, 2013

Re: Division of Research Update

I would like to welcome all faculty to another academic year. I am looking forward to the continued positive impact FIU's research has in our community and the nation. The remarkable achievements of FIU's research are exemplified through discoveries and advances in science that have been highlighted by the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health and numerous prestigious journals. The past five-year cumulative research expenditures at FIU have surpassed the half billion-dollar mark. All these achievements are testaments to our faculty, students, and researchers in the laboratories and the field.

I am pleased to announce that, during FY 2012-2013, FIU researchers and scholars exceeded once again the \$100M threshold in research grants, receiving awards valued over \$102M. This is the fourth consecutive year with research awards above \$100M. Moreover, at a time of reduced research and development funding from the federal government, research awards increased by 5.2%. Notable increases in awards, when compared with last fiscal year (FY 2011-2013), include the College of Architecture + The Arts (358.5% increase); the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (67% increase); the College of Business (44.4% increase); the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (42.4% increase), and the College of Arts & Sciences (34.8% increase).

The world of research funding is highly competitive, with shrinking R&D budgets from federal and state governments. Our response to this challenge must be to better position our faculty and researchers to be more competitive by improving the quality of grant applications, increasing the number of applications, and diversifying the sources of research funding. During the latter part of FY 2012-2013 and through the summer, we engaged in restructuring efforts within the Division of Research (DOR) aimed at assisting our faculty achieve their research development goals and building more robust research programs at FIU. Three new units were created and/or reorganized: Research Development, Research Operations and External Partnerships, and Training and International Research Initiatives. These new units are briefly described below. During the next few weeks, updates and changes will be reflected in the DOR website, and there will be communication in more detail with the colleges and faculty describing the roles and services provided by these units. Additionally, in collaboration with External Relations, we will launch the "DOR Communicator," which will provide relevant updates, and we will expand the Quarterly Newsletter.

The **Research Development Unit** aims to promote institutional excellence by strengthening research and scholarship activities at FIU. Existing research support services will be enhanced, and additional services will be offered, including professional development programs, proposal preparation assistance, multidisciplinary collaboration/team building, and on-line toolkits. The Unit is modeled after highly successful research development programs that are underway at many prestigious institutions, such as the University of Oklahoma, Harvard, the University of Michigan, and Princeton. I am pleased to announce that Maureen Pelham will be the Director of this Unit. Ms. Pelham joined DOR three and a half years ago as Director of Clinical Trials. She has had extensive experience in research development in other academic institutions and, prior to joining FIU, she was the Vice President of a major firm that assisted universities, health care organizations, local governments and non-profits in seeking research funding. During the next few weeks, we will be communicating with faculty and colleges regarding the launch of these new services. Maureen has already started working closely with leaders of faculty mentoring programs in the Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Engineering and Computing and the Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work. This Unit will also manage internal seed grants, which are currently on hold due to the need to divert funds to bridge funding for current grants impacted by Sequestration-related cuts. We expect that the internal funding program will be re-started in January 2014, but it will be revamped with a focus on strategic research areas of importance to the FIU mission.

Restructuring also included the creation of the **Research Operations and External Partnerships Unit** to assist investigators and research centers in obtaining resources and facilitating collaborations necessary to successfully maintain and expand their research operations. This Unit will focus on several key areas of research support to FIU faculty including a) physical resource optimization; b) administrative support to faculty and research centers with time-sensitive projects; c) dedicated post-award services for researchers responsible for large research operations; d) working with PIs, departments and colleges to assure that project timelines are not jeopardized by unnecessary and avoidable delays; and e) facilitating access to program officers and fostering communication with industry and business partners. This Unit will work closely with Governmental Relations in fostering relations with federal agencies as well as with colleges and technology management to expand collaboration with industry partners. Henry Artigues will be the Director of this Unit.

DOR recently created the **Training and International Research Initiatives Unit**, which primarily assists with management and administration of research training grants and international sponsored projects. This unit currently has specific management responsibilities for the *Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement (RISE)*—grant funded by NIH, whose PI is Robert Lickliter), the *Bridge to the Doctorate Program (BDP)*—funded by NSF, Shekhar Bhansali, PI), and the *MARC U☆* (funded by NIH, Ophelia Weeks, PI). Additionally, this Unit will lead DOR's efforts in managing and increasing funding for international research initiatives. Specific activities include working with multiple community, organizational, and academic partners in support of the goals of the programs; assisting with the coordination and development of trainings and events for the programs; developing and implementing special activities that meet programming needs, as well as providing management, administration and coordination assistance for large or complex research or sponsored projects aimed at training students, university fellows, or faculty. Dr. Susan Webster will be the Director of this Unit.

I also want to use this opportunity to highlight the **F&A (overhead) funding for research initiatives** and the practice of **crediting research awards across colleges and centers**. F&A is applied to the cost of operating DOR and the University's research enterprise. More than 50% of the F&A is invested outside of DOR in positions throughout the University and specific research-related costs and investments. During the past three fiscal years, \$7.8M of F&A has been committed to multiyear startups for newly recruited faculty. The colleges also commit to these startups through a combination of F&A they receive from DOR and other sources. F&A has also been used for required cost sharing, which often also require contributions from the colleges (e.g., the NSF's MRI cost share is split 50/50 between DOR and the colleges). During the past four years, F&A has been committed to the expansion of research facilities in the new AHC4 and AHC5 buildings, with a commitment of \$8.2M. Additionally, F&A is being used for the final set-up of labs in AHC4; \$700K has already been expended for seven faculty members and postdoc spaces, and an anticipated \$1M for Biomedical Engineering, Psychology and Biology faculty slated to move into labs during this fall semester. Finally, during the past three years, \$12.4M of F&A has been distributed to colleges, and during the past two years, under a new practice of providing 5% F&A to Principal Investigators, \$878K have been distributed directly to faculty.

In our reports to the Board of Trustees, we have been **crediting research awards** across colleges and centers, in essence, internally double counting the awards so that all participating units are credited. To illustrate two real examples, if a PI from the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) has a \$1M grant in the Southeastern Environmental Research Center (SERC), both the CAS and SERC receive the \$1M credit. Moreover, CAS receives 15% of the F&A whether the grant is in SERC or not. Similarly, if a PI from the College of Business Administration receives a \$1M grant for research he/she conducts in the International Hurricane Research Center, both the College and the Center are credited with the \$1M award, and the College receives the F&A distribution in the same manner and amount as would be the case if the research was not connected to the Center.

Lastly, the DOR Customer Satisfaction Survey will be sent out later this month. As many of you may know, the Division of Research has conducted an Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey the past four years. The survey is sent to all faculty members who either submitted a grant application or had an active grant during the past year. Many of the changes we are making are based on feedback we have received from these surveys. Please, once you receive the survey, take a few minutes to provide us with feedback. Such feedback is fundamental to our ability to continue to improve our services.