

## Never Settle Strategic Academic & Business Plan: Expanding Our Research Enterprise

Interim Vice President for Research  
November 2013

*As we continue our Special Report series on the **Never Settle** <sup>[1]</sup> Strategic Academic & Business Plan, Dr. Barton shares the strategy for expanding our research enterprise to create an environment that will attract even more top research talent and funding.*



**By Jennifer Barton**

Interim Vice President for Research  
November 15, 2013

Why do we conduct research? It's a question we must ask ourselves as the state's top research institution, and as part of our mission as Arizona's only land-grant university.

We conduct research to push the frontiers of knowledge, to improve humanity's well-being, to train the next generation, and to further Arizona's economic development. A strong and growing UA research enterprise that fulfills this fourfold mission is crucial to maintaining our standing in the top ranks of universities nationally, and to helping Arizona survive and thrive in the global economy.

As many of you have felt firsthand, research programs are under stress from the flagging economy and the federal sequester, leading to budget cuts in existing research programs and difficulty obtaining new awards. Additionally, years of state budget cuts have eroded our research infrastructure, while at the same time we are faced with competition from peer institutions in states that have invested strongly in research. It will be a significant challenge to meet the ABOR goal of doubling research expenditures.

Despite the challenges, the UA holds a position of strength. Our research expenditures in FY13 continued to grow, to \$632 million, due to the outstanding and broad-based strength of our faculty, programs and facilities. We have some of the most innovative faculty and programs in the world, including 49 National Academy and Institute of Medicine members, three MacArthur Fellows, and 11 top-10 ranked graduate programs. We have facilities that exist nowhere else in the world, including the Landscape Evolution Observatory, the Steward Observatory Mirror Laboratory and the High Temperature Materials Laboratory.

To move our research enterprise forward, we must create an environment that encourages and facilitates the efforts of faculty and investigators to be successful in research, with a particular emphasis on leveraging our broad-based strengths into the team proposals that are increasingly favored by funding agencies. We are developing enhanced central research development resources, including people and tools to facilitate large or complex team-based proposal preparation, access to services for finding grants and collaborators, and a new website that will consolidate "idea-to-closure" information for research grants and contracts. These resources will become available over the next year.

Additionally, we are developing a list of focused initiatives in areas where we have existing or emerging strengths, and where there exists an opportunity to dramatically increase research expenditures. These areas are interdisciplinary; each involves many colleges and units across the campus, and they are aligned with our broader strategic research areas. Initiatives with potential to double research expenditures include: population health/health outcomes, health care disparities, precision medicine, neuroscience, defense and security, space systems, and water and the arid environment.

By emphasizing our celebrated strengths, and focusing our efforts, we believe we can expand and enhance the success of our world-class research enterprise, and position it to positively impact Arizona's economy and the lives of Arizonans.

To learn more about the UA's efforts toward "Expanding Our Research Enterprise," plan to join President Hart, other senior leaders and me on Nov. 22 when we present the **Never Settle** <sup>[1]</sup> Strategic Academic & Business Plan to the Arizona Board of Regents. Details about the presentation can be found in this recent **campus memo** <sup>[2]</sup>.

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Links

[1] <http://www.neversettle.arizona.edu/> [2] [http://president.arizona.edu/memos\\_letters/never-settle-strategic-academic-and-business-plan-presentation-abor-nov-22](http://president.arizona.edu/memos_letters/never-settle-strategic-academic-and-business-plan-presentation-abor-nov-22)