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# USTAR brings researchers to U

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After the Utah State Legislature passed the Utah Science Technology and Research Initiative in 2006, which provides annual research funding for the U, fossil energy researcher Brian McPherson was one of the first faculty members hired with the funding.

McPherson, who graduated as a doctorate student in geophysics from the U in 1996, worked at a small engineering school in New Mexico after graduation. Almost 10 years to the day after his graduation, he was hired to come back to the U, this time as a researcher with funding from the USTAR initiative.

Now, McPherson assists coal-burning electric companies in limiting carbon dioxide emissions by putting it back to where it came from: into the ground.

"We research what are the implications of CO2 in the ground, like what will happen to the water supply, the rocks and what will be the impact and what is the possibility the CO2 will come back to the surface," he said.

McPherson and dozens of scientists are now running tests in Texas, southern Utah and will begin testing in New Mexico later this year.

When the legislature passed the USTAR initiative two years ago, the initiative was meant to invest more money in research at the U and Utah State University. Ongoing funding was given to allow the U to bring in more research teams, and other monies were to go toward the construction of a new campus research complex under the condition that the U would match the state's investment.

During the last legislative session, the U lobbied for an additional \$10 million in ongoing funding, but it did not pass. Instead, it received one-time funds of \$1.5 million.

"We're trying to make that work," said Jack Brittain, dean of the School of Business. "We can possibly add one or two more research teams."

McPherson brought a \$20 million grant with him as a USTAR hire. For the U and the state, the return from USTAR far outweighs the investment, he said.

Since arriving in 2006, McPherson wrote proposals for a \$67 million and a \$20 million grant, which he received for his fossil energy research.

"Having USTAR has helped me hire people and get research equipment," McPherson said. "USTAR is an investment by the state, and, to my knowledge, it's paying off."

McPherson was able to hire students, a lab technician and a project manager, all with USTAR funding, he said.

Brittain said that the U wants to expand in areas of research under USTAR, such as doing more work in cellular therapies, the use of adult stem cells and finding how to re-grow cartilage in knees.

Digital media expansion is another area where the U wants to grow. Earlier this year, the Governor's Office of Economic Development offered Disney a financial incentive to expand its operations in Salt Lake City. If this happens, it could bring 200 to 500 new jobs to the area, Brittain said.

"We already have stuff that we are doing here, but with key hires, we can do a lot more," he said.

Several new faculty researchers who have been hired under USTAR are arriving at the U this summer to adjust before Fall Semester. So far, 11 new faculty members have been hired under the initiative.

The U is looking for more researchers in chemistry, chemical fuels, biomedical devices and fossil energy.

New infrastructure to house USTAR research laboratories and facilities could go up as early as next year.

The first of four new buildings that will house USTAR researchers could break ground as soon as the spring of 2009 on land that is now the U golf course. The Neuroscience Biomedical Technology Building will house a nanofabrication facility and could open as soon as 2011.

"We are currently in the process of hiring design architects on the building," Brittain said.

Construction of a second building, which will sit close to the first building and will be part of a quad, could soon follow.

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