

***Statement opposing US05/06-6 – Concerning Lobbying the Department of Defense for UO Research Funding***

Jim Hutchison, Department of Chemistry, Materials Science Institute, April 10, 2006.

The motion before the Senate (US05/06-6—Concerning Lobbying the Department of Defense for UO Research Funding) threatens our scholarship, educational programs and academic freedom. It aims to limit the sources of funding available to conduct our scholarly activities and sets dangerous precedents regarding the faculty's ability to pursue their scholarly work.

It would be wise to consider the long-term ramifications of this motion. Imagine subsequent motions where the words "Department of Defense" were replaced with "National Endowment for the Humanities" or "Department of Human Services, i.e. NIH". The Faculty of the UO has not specifically endorsed these activities either. Such actions would clearly threaten the vitality of the research community at the UO. The current attack on DoD funded basic research has clear political motivations that have nothing to do with the issue of basic research funding. If the issue is research funding, let's discuss it. If the issue is militarization, that should be discussed outside the context of research funding.

I expect that it will be argued that the motion only strives to further discussion on this issue, but in fact, it places a barrier to progress. The proposed motion tables the discussion and places the burden of continuing the discussion on those adversely affected by it. If the senate aims to discuss the issue, then it should do so now.

To illustrate the radical nature of this motion, it is useful to contrast it with the recent important report issued jointly by the National Academies of Science and Engineering and the Institute of Medicine. The report, **Rising Above The Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future**, highlights the importance of DoD funding for the future of country, "Policy-makers should increase the national investment in basic research by 10 percent each year over the next seven years. Special attention should be paid to the physical sciences, engineering, mathematics, and information sciences, and to basic research funding for the U.S. Department of Defense."

Thus, the AAU, in lobbying for increased funding for basic research funding in DoD, keeps good company. In addition, it has been argued that the AAU lobbies on behalf of all defense funding when, in fact, they make it clear that they are arguing for more funding for basic and applied research (6.1 and 6.2) only.

The mission statement of the UO describes our efforts to create a community of scholars dedicated to the highest standards of academic inquiry, learning, and service. Some excerpts from the statement describe how the university strives to enrich the public that sustains it through

- a recognition that research, both basic and applied, is essential to the intellectual health of the university,
- the integration of teaching, research, and service as mutually enriching enterprises that together accomplish the university's mission and support its spirit of community
- the conviction that freedom of thought and expression is the bedrock principle on which university activity is based

The senate motion threatens each of these aims of the university and divides the community of scholars in the politicization of this issue. Specifically, the motion limits our ability to conduct basic research intended to benefit society – current DoD-funded UO research includes efforts to find cures for breast cancer, enhance K-12 education by understanding the mechanisms of cognition and guide the development of safer new technologies such as green nanotechnologies. In addition, the motion drives a wedge within the scholarly community and threatens each of our freedoms to pursue our academic activities by placing legitimate academic pursuits “off-limits”. It raises serious concerns about which research area or funding source will be targeted next.

The proponents of this motion have tried to mislead the Senate (during discussion on March 1, 2006) by trying to equate the greater than \$400B defense budget with the defense research budget. The reality is that the basic research budget for DoD is about \$1.5B, less than a 0.4%. UO DoD funding for basic research is < \$8M, 0.002 % of the DoD budget. So it cannot be argued that basic research is a large portion of the defense budget.

Please keep in mind that DoD funding supports outstanding faculty-driven research that benefits the broader academic community and society. Weapons research and classified research are NOT conducted. Instead, these funds are essential to outstanding interdisciplinary programs that provide world-class research opportunities for graduate students and faculty.

***Note added after the UO Senate Meeting of April 12:*** Debate during the meeting suggested that the issue underlying this motion is the use of specific phrases that appear to promote militarism in documents representing the UO . If this is the issue, it should be addressed directly, rather than taking actions that diminish the university’s ability to pursue funding for basic research.