

Board of Trustees
March 10, 2020
President's Report

Honors, Recognitions and Activities within the University Community

1. In recognition of creativity, leadership and achievements in research, neurobiologist Moriel Zelikowsky, Ph.D., assistant professor of Neurobiology and Anatomy at University of Utah Health, has received a 2020 Sloan Research Fellowship. She is one of 126 early career researchers from across the U.S. and Canada to earn the prestigious accolade from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. In today's society, stress-related mental health disorders and feelings of loneliness are on the rise but much remains to be learned about the neurological basis behind these behaviors and how to alleviate them. To gain new insights, Zelikowsky is investigating the neural circuitry underlying stress, fear and social behavior. Her investigations combine detailed behavioral analysis with cellular and molecular methodologies in order to formulate an in-depth understanding of the effects of social isolation stress on neural circuits and mechanisms. Her goals are to understand changes in brain function during and after stress, and make advances toward new treatments for neuropsychiatric disorders.

2. Undergraduate students from the University of Utah showcased their research for Utah lawmakers and the general public on Tuesday, Feb. 18 in the rotunda at the Utah State Capitol. Research on Capitol Hill, now in its 20th year, gives lawmakers and the public a glimpse of the breadth of research programs at the U and reinforces the value of state-funded higher education. The 26 presenters from the U hail from broad disciplines across campus, including engineering, medicine and social sciences. Project titles include "Daily Experiences of Children with Cancer Reported Through a Game-Based App," "Latter-day Saint Women and Wage Labor in the Twentieth Century" and "The Effects of Racial Dissimilarity on Students of Color's Participation in Groups."

3. The Green Power Partnership Top 30 College & University ranking, released January, 2020, lists the U as No. 8, with 49% of its energy supplied through geothermal and solar power purchase agreements. The U stands out among those listed for its use of geothermal energy. The Green Power Partnership Program—a voluntary EPA program—encourages green power use to reduce the environmental impacts associated with conventional electricity use. As of Nov. 1, 2019—through a partnership with Utah-based Cyrq Energy and Rocky Mountain Power—a geothermal plant in Nevada now supplies campus with 20 megawatts of geothermal energy and will do so the next 25 years. With this contract and the power generated by existing on-campus solar projects, the U's annual green power purchase rises to 161,671,969 kilowatt hours (kWh). This is the equivalent to powering almost 19,000 homes in Utah. This is the first time in its history the University of Utah will receive over half of its electricity from clean renewable sources. Total carbon emissions will be reduced by 23%.

4. The University of Utah has nine Fulbright semifinalists this year, equaling last year's record number. This year the U has seven undergraduate students and two doctoral students, including five English Teaching Assistant semifinalists, two Study Grant semifinalists and two Research Grant semifinalists. Making it to the semifinalist round is a significant accomplishment in the Fulbright competition, and means that the applications have been forwarded by the Fulbright National Screening Committee to the Fulbright Commission or U.S. Embassy in the host country

for final review. Finalists will be notified later this spring, with the timing of notifications varying by country.

5. University of Utah Health announced the launch of a pilot project with a goal of quickly and accurately detecting genetic disorders among newborns in its neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Clinicians believe that bringing precision medicine to the NICU will transform neonatal care, leading to better diagnosis and treatment of critically ill infants with genetic-related diseases while lowering medical costs and easing the emotional and financial burden on parents and families. With this project, U of U Hospital will join Primary Children's Hospital, also in Salt Lake City, as being part of a small group of hospitals worldwide to offer this type of advanced care. The multidisciplinary project team, which includes U of U Health pediatric specialists, neonatal physicians and bioinformatic genomics scientists, will use rapid whole genome sequencing (rWGS) to identify genetic mutations suspected of causing disease.