



Q & A

UD RESEARCH OFFICE

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Q: What is the UD Research Office's mission?

A: The core mission is to "advance the University's research enterprise." Five words, but it is a multifaceted challenge that is integrated into much of what we do as a university, from undergraduate and graduate education, to creative scholarship, infrastructure creation, economic development, and partnership building.

Q: What major goals have you set since you took the research helm in July 2008?

A: We have set five priority initiatives for the Research Office, each with action items aimed at making us a top-flight research university:

- (1) Build research capability and capacity;
- (2) Improve the growth rate of funded research;
- (3) Advance the impact and visibility of UD research and researchers;
- (4) Effectively advocate for the UD research enterprise; and
- (5) Cultivate operational excellence.

Q: What are UD's research strengths, and what areas are targeted for growth?

A: That's always a difficult question to answer without leaving something out! In the University's Path to Prominence,TM we tried to identify strengths on which we could build for significant impact. For example, the UD Energy Institute, launched in 2008, is built on internationally recognized strengths in solar photovoltaics, catalysis, and lightweight composites, as well as more recent successes in fuel cells and wind energy. Our upcoming environmental institute will span an even broader range of research and outreach. Both institutes will also have a strong public policy component.

Additionally, the new Delaware Health Sciences Alliance includes thrusts in cancer, cardiovascular health, and rehabilitation, connecting our strengths to those of our partner institutions and providing important translational connections for the fundamental biomolecular research activities of the Delaware Biotechnology Institute.

But it would be a mistake to focus only on these headline grabbers. One of the best parts of my position is the chance to see the wealth of UD research and creative activity being pursued across the social sciences, humanities, public policy, and other fields. And our real strength is our culture of collaboration! Framing multidisciplinary initiatives in the strategic plan or declaring grand challenges to be solved isn't much good if they do not resonate with a community eager to tackle them. I believe we have such a community here, and my most important task is to connect, nurture, promote, push, cajole, inspire — in short, to enable our faculty to make bigger things happen by working together!

Q: UD researchers have doubled the funding from competitive research grants in the past decade. Do you expect this trend to continue?

A: I am very bullish for two reasons. First, there has been a sea change in Washington in both the attitude toward research and the federal investment in research. As a nation, we have been seriously underinvesting in many fields for at least two decades. That is changing, not only with short-term "stimulus" funds, but in core budgets.

Second, UD has an enormously talented faculty. They are the "yeast" that will make the institution rise. I'm confident that with the right mix of resources and infrastructure, our rise will be even more dramatic. I see one of my critical missions as making the case statements and connections that will help attract both internal and external investments in UD research.

Q: What inspires you in your new job?

A: It is a privilege to be part of President Harker's team to help shape the University's future and to help realize the vision of the UD to come. As I interact with students and faculty colleagues in my new role, I am reminded that *they* are the University, and advancing their opportunities is what my job, and that of every other member of the administration, is all about.