

Contacts: Jack R. Warner, Executive Director and CEO
jack.warner@sdbor.edu

Tracy Mercer, Information Research Analyst
tracy.mercer@sdbor.edu

Telephone: (605) 773-3455

Fax: (605) 773-5320

www.sdbor.edu

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Regents Hear Report on Governor's Research Centers

ABERDEEN, S.D. – According to a report presented to the South Dakota Board of Regents, the Governor's Research Centers continue to meet their goals for accelerating growth of competitive research and strengthening South Dakota's economy through emphasis on converting ideas to commercial endeavors.

“South Dakota has traditionally lagged behind other states in competitive research. Funding of the research centers back in 2004, at the request of Governor Rounds, was a real jump start for the state to generate translational research that can provide an economic benefit for South Dakota,” said System Vice President of Research and Economic Development Paul Turman.

The state currently funds five Governor's Research Centers, including the Center for Ultra-Low Background Experiments at DUSEL (CUBED), which works to produce high-purity germanium crystals. These crystals are used in the development of high sensitivity detectors, high quality optoelectronic sensors, and high resolution imaging systems for use in underground physics experiments, high efficiency solar cells/panels, and for use in biomedical sciences. Currently the crystals are an integral part of the work being done at the Sanford Underground Research Facility to detect dark matter. With a market value of \$30,000 to \$50,000 per kilogram, the detectors for the Majorana experiment alone could approximate a \$300 million investment. In its short lifespan as a center, CUBED has generated an additional \$4.3 million in external grant funding from a \$2.5 million state investment.

The centers were designed to receive state funding for the first five years of operation, after which time they are expected to be self-sustaining. One such center that has “graduated” is the Center for Drought Tolerance Biotechnology (CDTB) at South Dakota State University which continues to maintain a high level of sustainability after transitioning from state funding in 2009. The center continues to focus on research that leads to emerging technologies in drought-tolerant crops, with a goal of increasing the availability of drought-resistant products for farmers in South Dakota. Through collaboration with South Dakota seed and crop-related entities, crop research and promotion boards, and individual biotechnology companies, more than \$6 million has been committed to the center.

“The initial \$2.9 million investment by the state has resulted in more than \$23.6 million in external funding,” said Turman. “This is close to an 800 percent return on investment to the state with many more years of research commercialization opportunities in the future from the CDTB and the other Governor Research Centers.”