Funding Woes Hurt Genome Researchers

By KRISTINA CASTO

Genetics research is on the brink of a revolution that might bring huge finan cial and humanitarian rewards for institutions that take part in it.

N.C. research universities are intent on getting in on the action, but growth in the area of genome research depends on state funding, which is scarce these days in North Carolina.

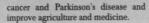
Scientists say that if the state legisla-ture does not build facilities and pay fac-ulty competitively, schools will lose the talent the attention talent that attracts much-needed grants.

Anonymous donors recently created an endowed UNC-CH professorship involving human genome research in memory of the late Chancellor Michael Hooker, who died last year from cancer.

Research universities like N.C. State University and UNC-Chapel Hill receive grant money from federal orga-nizations such as the National Institutes of Health and private companies to support their work in genome research.

"We are in competition with other university systems (in genome research)," said Charles Moreland, N.C. State vice chancellor of research. "There is urgency because people who get out front and get the results are going to reap the benefits." Unraveling the human genome, the raw data behind humans' genetic make-

up, could end human diseases such as



Researchers and lawmakers say the legislature has to fund research at its public universities because the universities contribute to the state's economic health "A state government makes an invest-

ment in bricks and mortar and talent and then the talent goes out and gets more money," said Jeff Dangl, a UNC-CH biology professor.

But some say the state is failing in its obligation to research universities Rep. George Miller, D-Durham, is

co-chairman of a legislative committee evaluating campuses' capital needs. He called a recent decrease in state higher education funding, from 17 to 13 percent of the budget, "a lack of foresight." "We have not been careful to maintain our institutionism," Miller said.

A multibillion-dollar bond package for capital improvements aimed at attracting quality faculty and students failed in the legislature last summer.

Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland, admitted that the state economy would suffer if the legislature did not begin

investing more money in universities. But he was not sure of where to find that money. "We've taken all the money we can find for hurricane relief," he said.

"So we're really out of money." The State & National Editor can be

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State

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standing faculty members to Carolina," he said. Faculty members in the Department of Biology echoed Hallman's senti-

ments

Gustavo Maroni, associate chairman of the department, said the endowment was very timely. The human genome, which contains

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much water will be needed, but (our local officials) have a responsibility to the community to be prepared," he said. "Our entire staff agrees that an expand-

ed water quarry is a good thing." Experts predicted demand for water would increase from its current demand of 9 million gallons per day to about 22 million gallons per day in 2050.

David Parrish, a resident near the proposed quarry expansion site, said he was worried that the damages his prop-erty would suffer as a result of the

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Corporate lesson #1:

impartiality in cases similar to the

Shearon Harris expansion. "If we had an unbiased federal

agency doing the study, it would prob-ably help more," he said. "With the NRC, you never know." As far as the status of the Shearon

Harris expansion proposal, Hannah said

Never pass up a great offer.

genetic information that we carry and pass on to our children, should be sequenced this summer, Maroni said. "It's like a code; we will be able to read those genes," he said. "There are about 80,000 of them." Biology Professor Jeff Dangl said the ordowrent was a crimificant etem in fur.

endowment was a significant step in fur-thering genomics research but also for attracting and retaining quality faculty. "I think this is huge because there's been a discussion of retention of midyear faculty," he said.

expansion would be ignored. "I'm concerned that American Stone

and OWASA want to provide a 10-acre park, but what are they willing to do for the damages that have already been committed against my house?" he said. "They have not done anything, and I OWASA and American Stone, a pri-

ate quarrying corporation that wou like to expand its operations to its 25acre quarry in the area, have offered up about 20 concessions to residents affect

ed by the proposed expansion. The proposal, dubbed the Mitigation Program, includes plans for a 10-acre community park as well as a promise to

the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board was close to making a decision on whether to allow the expansion or call another evidentiary hearing

A group of officials representing the Chapel Hill Town Council, the Carrboro Board of Aldermen and the Orange County Board of Commissioners met with Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., in February to request his assistance in the matter and share their concerns.

"This professorship allows us to keep midyear faculty from being courted by prestigious universities." Dangl said the professorship would help the University teach students bet-

"Sixty percent of the incoming fresh man class have identified themselves as science majors," he said. "We need resources to teach and train them."

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only use the site for reservoir and quar rying purposes.

Paxton Batum, a representative from American Stone, said the company offered to secure a 500-foot buffer area around the reservoir, pay for repairs to private wells damaged in the expansion rocess, establish strict noise ordinances on construction and provide compensation for any losses in property value. "It's not like we're going into a pris-

tine garden to start a quarry," he sa "We want to be good citizens and we want to be good neighbors."

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Edwards continues to be involved in the issue, said Mike Briggs, his press sec-

"He is still monitoring the issue and talking to the NRC about holding another hearing," he said.

"Apparently some decision is coming down the pike in April that will address that.

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ority enrollment.

They settled on an admissions pro-gram where the top 10 percent of high school seniors statewide would be accepted into colleges. "At UT-Austin)] and at Texas A&M (the two most selecenrollment has gone back up to what it was before being affirmative action was '#

outlawed," Jones said. But problems still exist, and minority

enrollment is still lower than adminis trators would like, he said. And opponents of rank-based admis- 391 sions argue that the number of minority students would be redistributed rather students would be redistributed that than increased throughout the public of

university systems. Jerry Lucido, director of undergrad-uate admissions at UNC-Chapel Hill, rl. said an automatic admissions policy was off, not educationally sound and that of administrators needed to examine whether it would actually increase minority enrollment.

"What has happened now is, because of that 4 percent (automatically accept- i) ed in California), Berkeley and UCLA and San Diego – their most selective 10 schools – their diversity has dropped by considerably and been redistributed at 101 other campuses," Lucido said.

And in Texas, he said, minority db enrollment might have gone up to ear- ao lier levels at two universities, but it has imgone down at others.

In adopting admissions policies for incoming UNC students, administrators have always used race as a one of many 198 iderations, Lucido said.

"It's not the only factor, it's not the redominant factor, but it is a factor,'

he said. "We want that class to be bright. "Le (And) we want that class to reflect

many different cultures." Lucido said minority enrollment at UNC was an issue that had been con- st sistently discussed for the last several and decades, but that a class-rank admissions policy had never been considered. or

"I know our system will be discussing very soon our minority presence, and we will be looking at how to enhance 400 minority presence," he said. "(But) I as know of no similar movement (to the d-5 class-rank policy) in our system."

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ABORTION TO 20 WEEKS

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