

A VINTAGE SOUND



DTH/STEVE ANDRAWES

Grammy award winning band Los Lobos performs at Memorial Hall on Sunday. With David Hidalgo on vocals, the Latino sensation has already won three Grammys in the past two decades. The band has been together since 1974. Visit dailytarheel.com for the full story.

BOT focuses on graduate student issues

BY BRIAN HUDSON
UNIVERSITY EDITOR

Members of the University Board of Trustees announced last week that they will investigate the needs of UNC's graduate students.

During Wednesday's meeting of the board's University Affairs Committee, Faculty Chairwoman Judith Wegner underscored the importance of improving graduate students' benefits to attract the best students.

When assisting in the classrooms and the labs, graduate students are an integral part of the University's educational fabric, Wegner said.

Trustee Rusty Carter, chairman of the committee, requested a report on graduate student tuition be prepared to bring trustees up to speed.

He said the committee will take this year to look into graduate students' concerns.

"You will hear a lot more about the grad school and our thoughts and feelings on that as the year moves on," Carter told the rest of the trustees during their full meeting Thursday.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

NIH: no gender bias in funding

BY KRISTIN PRATT
STAFF WRITER

Data from a RAND Corp. report released last Monday suggests the National Institute of Health awards more grants to men than to women, but the NIH says the finding is not completely accurate.

Following a Congressional directive to investigate gender gaps in research funding, the RAND study looked at three years of data from 2001 to 2003. Researchers found that women received only about 63 percent of the amount men received from the NIH during that time — a gap of 37 percent for all awards.

No such gender differences were found in grants awarded by the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as analyzed by the RAND group.

For NSF from 2001 to 2003, the mean funding awarded to men was \$84,200, and for women it was \$85,100. The agricultural department from 2000 to 2002 gave men \$28,300 and women \$27,600.

RAND Corp. notes in its report that the data from the NIH did not include the amount of funding requested, so it is hard to determine if the gender gap reflects a difference in the number of applications for funding or the institution's decision of how much money to award.

Norka Ruiz Bravo, NIH deputy director of extramural research

said that was a key piece of missing information.

"The simple conclusion is to leap to discrimination," she said. "You need to look at all of it."

She said analyzing the success rate of getting grants depends on looking both at the number of awards given and the number of applicants.

"(Women) have in fact been, for research project grants, as successful as men," Ruiz Bravo said.

A report compiled in 2004 by Dr. Peter Preusch, an NIH health science administrator, found that grant applications from women were accepted at nearly the same rate as those from men.

For fiscal year 2003, the NIH reviewed 8,681 applications for research project grants from women and awarded 2,617 grants, an acceptance rate of 30.1 percent. For men, 23,868 applications were reviewed and 7,296 awarded, an acceptance rate of 30.5 percent.

The RAND report concedes that more data is needed.

"Our understanding of gender differences in federal research is incomplete," the RAND report states. "Those interested in how women are represented in the federally funded research community may want to focus first on how they are represented in the applicant pool and on their decisions to apply for grants."

Any changes in the way the NIH awards funding would have implications for higher education.

The NIH's budget for 2005 is \$28.6 billion, and 55 percent of that goes toward funding research projects, said Ruiz Bravo.

For fiscal year 2004, UNC ranked 16th out of 3,181 schools in the top awards given to institutions, receiving 777 awards for a total of more than \$280 million.

"NIH is the most important of the three (grant-awarding federal agencies)," said UNC Provost Robert Shelton. "They hand out far and away the most dollars combined."

University officials said UNC does not have any major problems with a gender gap in federal funding.

"I am not aware of any grant issues," said Silvia Tomaskova, director of the women and science program at the University.

Federal funding differs based on profession, Tomaskova said. For example, most of the biology professors receive NIH grants, whereas some other fields might receive money from the NSF.

She said the school treats both genders equally in terms of funding and that the broader issue is the relatively low number of women in science professions at the University.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntidesk@unc.edu.

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