

# Professor honored with Nobel Prize in medicine

BY KATE SULLIVAN  
ASSISTANT UNIVERSITY EDITOR

UNC congratulated one of its own for winning a top international award in October, when Oliver Smithies, professor of pathology and laboratory medicine, received the Nobel Prize for medicine.

Smithies, 82, was honored along with his two co-recipients, Mario Capecchi of the University of Utah, and Sir Martin Evans of Cardiff University, for their work in the field of genetic targeting.

In December, Smithies and his colleagues traveled to Stockholm to receive their prizes from King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden and to present their research, which they have been working on for more than 20 years.

Gene targeting selects a certain gene in the genetic makeup of mice and deletes it to see how the animal is affected without that gene.

The method of gene targeting is one that is widely used in the area of research physiology, and while it is used only in mice at this point, the procedure has led to advancements in human medicine and has

become common practice.

"I get a great deal of enjoyment in opening scientific magazines and seeing people using gene targeting," Smithies said in October.

Even after 19 years at the University, the now-Nobel laureate has never strayed far from his lab bench, preferring to focus on his research rather than take on administrative positions within the hospital.

Previous Nobel laureates with connections to the University include two former adjunct professors, an alumnus, a post-doctorate fellow, a fellow and an honorary doctorate. All received their awards in medicine or chemistry.

"We need a lot of stars, and we also need a superstar," Joe Templeton, chairman of the faculty, said in October. "What happened (Oct. 8) was one of our own faculty colleagues has been recognized as a world science superstar."

For UNC, Smithies' honor brings the University into an international limelight.

Many of UNC's peer universities have several laureates, such as the University of California at



Professor of pathology and laboratory medicine Oliver Smithies won a Nobel Prize for gene targeting.

Berkeley, which claims 15 full-time faculty laureates.

Officials at that university said the award helps in fundraising, student enrollment and faculty retention.

And those who know Smithies personally say the award was well-deserved.

"It's really a pleasure to those of us who have been in science for a long time," Bill Marzluff, associate dean for research at the School of Medicine, said in October of Smithies' win.

And even after claiming his prize in Sweden, Smithies has returned to his lab where he continues to work.

"I can have my glow for a while," he said in October.

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## Trustees OK Carolina North

BY WHITNEY KISLING  
UNIVERSITY EDITOR

When the conceptual plans for the nearly 1,000-acre satellite research campus came before UNC's Board of Trustees for approval at the September meeting, trustees called the moment one of the project's most definitive.

After giving the OK to Carolina North, which will house several research projects, academic sectors and residential units, the University's next big step is to give the plans to the Chapel Hill Town Council for the first time officially.

And although that won't happen until sometime in 2008 — months later than originally planned — council members are getting their first "informal discussion" of Carolina North in just a few weeks, at their annual retreat this weekend, said Jack Evans, Carolina North's executive director.

"The council has actually not received any official information from the University about Carolina North," he said. "So this is positioned as an informal initial discussion."

Also expected this spring are the results of the town's transit study for 2035 and the fiscal impact analysis for the project. These two studies should suggest ways the University and town can work together to prepare for those consequences.

In 2007 and in past years, both

the town and University have evaluated Carolina North and its potential effect on each, but the two have not officially come together in an evaluative and concrete method.

"2008 is really the year that Carolina North should begin its formal process," said Roger Perry, chairman of the Board of Trustees.

The 2007 culmination of other studies, such as the ecological study, and community and official input will guide the formal process in 2008.

After the leadership advisory council submitted its report to UNC leaders in January, community members got a chance to comment on Carolina North when Evans and other key officials held community meetings March through October.

The meetings were meant to use the community's thoughts to narrow concept plans from three ideas to one submission to the trustees in September, Evans said.

"We want the community to understand how our thinking is developing and give them a chance to ask questions," he said in March.

Still, the town-gown relationship was stressed just a few weeks before concept plans came to trustees when several local officials criticized UNC for sliding in the innovation center — the "front door" of the project — before the whole concept plan is submitted to the town.

"One of the enticements for the town ... was that we would collaboratively plan and do a master plan," Mayor Pro Tem Bill Strom said at a September meeting. "Going into a prime entrance way to Carolina North before the studies are done are really counter to that."

UNC officials have said they were open with the town on their agenda, pointing to the innovation center's developer, Alexandria Real Estate Equities Inc., as the reason for pressing its groundbreaking in 2009.

"This particular developer is being aggressively recruited by other universities," Bruce Runberg, associate vice chancellor for facilities planning and construction, said at the September meeting.

In an effort to be open with the town, UNC officials held a meeting for Alexandria representatives to discuss the project with the community in November. About 100 people attended, focusing on transit and pedestrian safety.

After all the meetings with the town and the consultants, Carolina North should be set for a concrete process that engages both UNC and Chapel Hill. "We feel the planning for both the long term and the near term of Carolina North have moved forward substantially," Evans said.

Contact the University Editor at [udesk@unc.edu](mailto:udesk@unc.edu).

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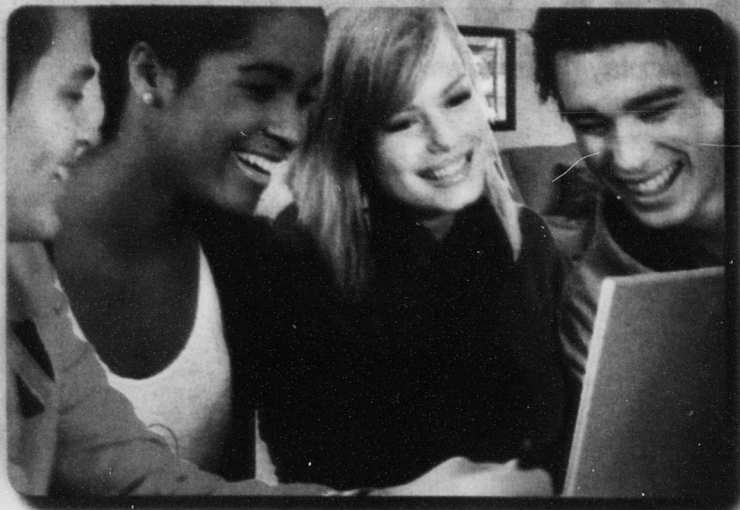
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