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### Prop 4 money years away

UNT will have criteria to meet before applying for new state research funds

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By Candace Carlisle / Staff Writer

As University of North Texas officials envision the university's future as a national research institution, they hope to bring millions of new grant money to the region to make that happen.

However, it could take five to 10 years before UNT sees those funds, according to university officials.

Voters approved a state proposition last week to allow seven emerging research universities in Texas, including UNT, to apply for funds from a \$500 million dormant higher education account.

The new fund, called the National Research University Fund, would help Texas compete against other states for students and faculty, as well as bring economic prosperity to the region, said UNT President Gretchen Bataille.

"It was fortuitous the state of Texas decided to invest in research institutions, which will drive economic development," Bataille said.

The emerging research universities — UNT, the University of Texas at Arlington, UT-Dallas, Texas Tech University, the University of Houston, UT-El Paso and UT-San Antonio — would need to meet a laundry list of criteria before the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board would grant the funds.

The details of the program haven't been fully defined by the board and UNT would need to meet a milestone of \$45 million in restricted research dollar expenditures before applying for the program, said Andy Kesling, assistant director of communications from the board.

The seven universities would also need to meet four of six additional criteria, which include a \$400 million endowment and 200 doctoral degrees awarded annually, he said.

Other benchmarks include high-quality students and faculty, which the coordinating board has yet to define.

The board has appointed no committees to develop these definitions, and no meeting dates have been announced yet, Kesling said.

"The coordinating board staff is in the process of developing plans and timelines to address the passage of Proposition 4," he said.

One provision of the proposition allotted \$25 million to match new private research gifts funded to the university.

Within a day of the proposition's passage, Texas' seven emerging research universities claimed the entire amount — with UNT receiving about \$1.72 million of those funds, Bataille said.

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### **Taking stock**

It could take years before UNT's restricted research dollar expenditures reach the \$45 million threshold, Bataille said.

Although UNT has roughly \$37.7 million in total external awards, about \$22.6 million qualifies as research expenditures, she said, and of that amount, the university estimates only \$11.2 million of those awards would qualify as restricted research dollar expenditures.

"We will meet the \$45 million threshold, only it will take five to 10 years to get to \$45 million," Bataille said. "I feel good about where we are. ... It's sort of frustrating to know the contributions [by UNT] are huge ... but they are not all defined as restricted research dollars. At some point we'll be there."

None of the emerging research institutions currently meets the \$45 million threshold, she said.

And while UNT is on the way to meeting the specified expenditures, UT-Dallas, University of Houston and Texas Tech are closer to that threshold, Bataille said.

The definition of the restricted research expenditures is geared toward engineering programs, and UNT's engineering department is only six years old, she said.

For UNT, with an internationally known music program and known as an arts university, it's about playing catch-up, she said.

Once UNT meets the \$45 million threshold, the university would likely meet most of the six requirements set by the coordinating board, depending on the board's definitions of those criteria, she said.

The university graduated 211 doctoral students during the 2007-08 year, has quality students and faculty and has a large online library, Bataille said.

"We have some high-quality faculty, but is it enough? We don't know," she said.

The university's estimated \$90 million endowment fund is far short of the required \$400 million; however, having UNT considered among the emerging research institutions in Texas is an honor, Bataille said.

"We're happy to be in the mix — it says a lot of the university," she said.

### **Working together**

More restricted research dollars are trickling through the pipeline at UNT, but the university needs time to develop the programs of a national research institution, such as the engineering program, said Vish Prasad, vice president for research and economic development.

Already, the College of Engineering is seeing significant enrollment growth, and technology created by the engineering department in collaboration with the physics and chemistry departments is cutting-edge, such as jet engine research and understanding the microstructure of materials, Prasad said.

"There are very few institutions that partner engineering and sciences," Prasad said. "We have more focused applications of the software and we are in a better position ... to take the applications to the market."

Along with collaboration among its departments and schools, UNT will work with other Dallas-Fort Worth emerging research institutions, UT-Dallas and UT-Arlington, to develop symbiotic partnerships of expertise for the North Texas area, Prasad said.

"We're trying to collaborate with other D-FW institutions, rather than just compete," Prasad said. "By covering different areas, the students will have better access and the research will be more effective."

By late spring, UNT and other North Texas universities will submit a strategic plan on how to move forward as national research institutions and compete against major universities throughout the globe, he said.

"Texans want Texas universities to compete against major universities," he said. "And UNT will certainly compete and move ahead as fast as we can."

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Hey, this is Texas, where we have our priorities right. When UNT asked the state government to approve the building of the new football stadium, it passed on the first go. Research? Are you gonna give that money to them Darwinists and other godless scientists?



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These are excellent requirement since they mean that almost none of the "universities" will meet them.



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