USU Tops List for Nuclear Engineering Research | College of Engineering

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Utah State University News Release — Sept. 11, 2019 — USU is once again being recognized as a national leader in nuclear engineering research.

On Sept. 10, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission announced it was awarding USU two large grants totaling $831,628. The purpose of the funding is to encourage careers and research in nuclear, mechanical, and electrical engineering, health physics and related fields to meet workforce needs. The funding will support scholarships, fellowships and faculty development.

One grant for $400,000 will provide graduate-level fellowships for up to two students per year. Program lead Ryan Berke, an assistant professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, says the funding will help attract top students to USU.

“This funding will allow us to expand our nuclear research capabilities and attract highly qualified graduate students to our mechanical engineering programs,” said Berke. “USU is well positioned as a leader in nuclear engineering research because we are the closest PhD-granting institution to Idaho National Lab.”

A second grant for $431,628 will support faculty development in nuclear engineering research. Barton Smith, a professor in the same department, says the funding is earmarked to support two newly hired tenure-track faculty who are poised to strengthen USU’s leadership in nuclear engineering research.

“Dr. Hailei Wang and Dr. Geordie Richards complement and expand our expertise,” said Smith. “They are among the most qualified experts, and we anticipate they will make significant improvements to our research programs and grow the nuclear engineering workforce.”

USU has long been a prominent nuclear engineering research institution. Smith, Berke and fellow researchers are highly competitive at securing federal research dollars, and USU engineering students consistently outshine competing schools for nuclear-related scholarship funding. USU is also home to an active student chapter of the American Nuclear Society, and the university is home to the newly-formed Thermohydraulics and Material Properties Research Center. More information is available at nuclear.usu.edu.

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