By Kim McDonald   Nov 09, 2017

A Steady Increase in Women Leading the Biggest Research Grants

Six of the top 10 research health science grants awarded to UC San Diego this year are led by women. And Christina Chambers, a professor of pediatrics at UC San Diego's School of Medicine, heads four of those projects, which pulled in a grand total of $25.24 million.

Chambers, who is also the director of clinical research for the Department of Pediatrics, studies the impact of drugs, alcohol and other environmental factors on pregnant women and their newborns through international registries. That requires her to work with large teams of collaborators from around the nation as well as the world.

"The types of large grants that are available today are ones that require team science," she said. "It's not so much a single investigator doing incremental science in the lab. It's people working in a consortium with multiple sites who need to work together in a collaborative way. I have lots of male colleagues who work really well in groups, but this is a natural strength that women possess that I think lends itself well to this funding environment."

While 2017 may be an exceptional year, a statistical anomaly due to the way grants are recorded and principal investigators selected to head proposals with multiple researchers, an analysis of the top 40 research awards since fiscal year 2013 on the main campus and in health sciences combined shows a steady increase in the number and cumulative dollar amount of large research grants headed by women.

According to the analysis, conducted by the campus Office of Contract and Grant Administration, women were the principal investigators of six research awards totaling $24 million in 2013, nine awards totaling $42 million in 2015, 12 awards totaling $48 million in 2016, and 18 awards totaling $89 million in 2017.

Viewed another way, when compared to grants headed by male principal investigators, women principal investigators five years ago accounted for a smaller share, or $24 million, of the total number of top research awards, than male principal investigators, who accounted for $133 million. But this year, the top grant awards headed by female principal investigators accounted for a larger share of the total, some $89 million, compared to those headed by male principal investigators at $72 million.

Following are the lists of the top 10 research grants in both Health Sciences and Academic Affairs this year as well as graphs showing the steady growth in the past five years in female principal investigators heading the 40 largest campus grants in both categories:

FY 17 Top Ten Awards – Academic Affairs

Rank	Agency	Principal Investigator	
1	NSF	**Kim Elaine Barrett**	$8,807,166
2	NSF	**Kimberly A. Prather**	$7,544,753
3	NSF	**Nancy Ruth Wilkins-Diehr**	$6,530,586
4	NSF	**Kimberly C. Claffy**	$3,965,000
5	DHHS	**Terry Lynne Jernigan**	$3,496,917
6	State of California	**Karen L. Christman**	$2,839,317
7	Private Non-Profit	**Nancy Ruth Wilkins-Diehr**	$2,782,078
8	Private Non-Profit	Eliah Sea Aronoff-Spencer	$2,411,480
9	DHHS	Jesse Vincent Jokerst	$2,325,00
10	NIH	**Elizabeth Villa**	$2,325,000

FY 17 Top Ten Awards – Health Sciences

Rank	Agency	Principal Investigator	
1	DHHS	Howard Feldman	$11,280,989
2	Industry	**Christina Chambers**	$9,966,891
3	DHHS	Gary S. Firestein	$7,177,233
4	Industry	**Christina Chambers**	$6,054,452
5	State of California	**Stephanie Cherqui**	$5,273,189
6	Industry	Thomas J. Kipps	$5,000,000
7	Private Non-Profit	**Elizabeth A. Winzeler**	$4,748,025
8	Industry	**Christina Chambers**	$4,679,238

Rank	Agency	Principal Investigator	
9	Industry	**Christina Chambers**	$4,555,593
10	Industry	Jerrold M. Olefsky	$4,512,236

Increase in ## and $$ of research awards made to female PI's for Academic Affairs and Health Sciences combined (top 40), year by year comparison (Excludes SIO)

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