

UC Regents voted to create separate research unit for Bioengineering

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NEW UCSD RESEARCH UNIT CREATED FOR BIOENGINEERING

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The Board of Regents of the University of California today voted to create a separate research unit focused on biomedical engineering at the University of California, San Diego.

The new unit, called the Biomedical Engineering Institute, is designed to foster interdisciplinary research among faculty members interested in bioengineering from a several areas including engineering, medicine, biology and chemistry. For more than two decades, UCSD has been at the forefront of bioengineering research among U.S. universities.

Initially, the new research unit will consist of about 40 faculty members who will meet periodically during seminars and workshops. "This will bring more cohesion to biomedical engineering at UCSD," said Shu Chien, professor of bioengineering and medicine, who helped organize the unit. "It is a mechanism by which we can get people together to discuss research of common interests and new approaches to bioengineering."

Chien said a director for the new research unit will be appointed by UCSD Chancellor Richard C. Atkinson after candidates are screened by a nominating committee.

The creation of the new unit follows the announcement of several major awards and grants last year to UCSD faculty interested in bioengineering.

These accomplishments include:

*Y. C. Fung, professor emeritus of bioengineering and known by some as the "father of biomechanics," was selected to senior membership in the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

*The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute awarded the bioengineering faculty of the Division of Engineering a five- year, \$5.6 million Program Project Grant to develop fundamental knowledge to help improve the diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular diseases.

*The Bioengineering Group, under Chien's leadership, also received an \$1.6 million grant to train graduate and postdoctoral students.

*David Gough, professor of bioengineering, was awarded a patent for a surgically implanted glucose sensor for diabetic patients. Researchers hope that the matchbook-sized device eventually could be coupled with an implanted insulin pump to provide diabetics with an automatic system for monitoring blood sugar levels and administering proper insulin doses as needed.

"We're hopeful that new proposals will develop from this organized research unit," Chien said.

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