BenchMarks 2007, October 5

The Rockefeller University

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BENCHMARKS
THE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2007

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Music room has new piano. Minor renovations made to the music room over the summer include the purchase of a new Kawai K6 upright piano, which replaces the damaged Steinway model previously available there. A Dampf-Chafer climate-control system has also been installed. The music room is accessible with a specially coded Rockefeller ID card, and the room can be reserved at www Rockefeller.edu/calendar. For more information, contact Kacey Koeppe, 212-327-8971 or koeppek@rockefeller.edu.

2007 golf outing raises $3,000. The 5th annual event, on September 5 at Split Rock Golf Course in the Bronx, raised a record amount of money for the Child and Family Center. Winners of the men’s tournament were: Alex Kogan, associate vice president for physical facilities and housing; and third place: Joe O’Connor, of Turner Construction, in second place; and Agnelius Sow, custodial assistant supervisor, in first place. In the women’s, Alexandra Mihai, research assistant in the Tuschl laboratory, won second place, Amy Willerksen, associate vice president of research support, placed first. Money raised will go toward CFC supplies and playground equipment.

Fall Insight Lectures begin. This year’s Insight Lectures — which feature talks on science, policy, and the humanities — began October 2. The fall lineup includes:

October 2 What We Can Learn from Exploring the Computational Universe. Stephen Wolfram, chief executive officer, Wolfram Research.

October 22 The Sociology and Science of Drug Discovery. Peter N. Goodfriend, former senior vice president of research discovery, GlaxoSmithKline.


Announcements may be submitted to www Rockefeller.edu/benchmarks.

FINANCE

‘08 budget devotes record $183 million to research

by ZACH VEILEUX

Rockefeller’s operating budget this fiscal year has increased by 4.7 percent over last year but remains balanced, anticipating a modest surplus of $400,000 by the time the books close in June 2008. “Despite the projected loss of some federal grant revenue this year, the budget remains stable due to increases in private grant awards and increased endowment spending,” says James Lapple, vice president for finance. “The university has also been able to increase its hard dollar support to the laboratories in excess of $4.5 million over the previous year.”

The biggest decrease in this year’s revenue is in the government grants category, which reflects both budget tightening at the National Institutes of Health and the planned departure of faculty members who had NIH grants. Grants from private sources, however, including funding from foundations, increased by 28 percent from the preceding year’s budget, making up much of the difference. “This is largely due to faculty seeking other sources of funding at a time when NIH money has become less reliable,” Mr. Lapple says. “They have been exceedingly competitive in this area.”

While development gifts toward the operating budget have been steady, money from the endowment has risen as a result of a policy change that allows the university to spend a greater share of the endowment’s proceeds. Approved last winter by the university’s board, the increased spend rate allows the university to devote more of the endowment’s growth to current needs while still maintaining “intergenerational equity” that keeps the university well positioned over the long term. The spend rate increased to 5.5 percent of an average market value in fiscal year 2008 and will increase twice more, to 7.5 percent in FY09 and to 6.0 percent in FY10.

Other sources of revenue, which include the university’s auxiliary services (such as food service, housing and the Rockefeller University Press, all of which more or less break even), royalties, leases, parking permits and interest on working capital, are predicted to be consistent. Ex- ternal rent revenue will decrease slightly as some outside labs had to vacate Smith Hall because of construction. On the expenditures side, the university has grown by 4.7 percent overall, an amount similar to that of previous years. Spending on research is projected to increase by 4.0 percent, reflecting increased investment in the labs and resource centers. And debt service will rise by 14 percent this year because of $100 million the university will borrow for construction of the Collaborative Research Building.

CAMPUS NEWS

Hospital to grant master’s degrees

The Center for Clinical and Translational Science begins degree program in clinical and translational research

by TALLEY HENNING BROWN

In 2010, The Rockefeller University will include more than Ph.D.s among its alumni. As part of the plan established when Rockefeller received its first Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) from the National Institutes of Health, The Rockefeller University Hospital’s Clinical Scholars Program now serves as a vehicle for three-year degree-track program in clinical and translational research. The endpoint: Rockefeller’s first master’s degrees.

Led by hospital physician in chief Barry Coller, medical director James Krueger and associate professor of clinical investigation Sarah Schlesinger, eight postgraduate students are currently enrolled in the program. One of only 12 institutions nationwide to win a prestigious CTSA last year, Rock- efeller University established the master’s program in accordance with the award’s provisions. Drs. Coller, Krueger and Schlesinger — all leaders in the Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS) created by the award — in collaboration with the Dean’s Office, drafted the ap- plication to the New York State Board of Regents for authority to award the degree. After an initial third-party review required by the state, the application was success- ful, and the CCTS enrolled its first master’s candidates in January. The new program is designed to prepare scientists with previous doctoral degrees for careers in patient-oriented research.
Faculty recruitment (continued from page 1)

led a very effective search that led to the identification of two brilliant propo-
sing candidates at the assistant professor level. For personal and geographic rea-
sons, both of these candidates decided not to join us, but both emphasized that they had been enormously impressed by the university and the recruit ment process. One said that she could not think of a more supportive and intellectually rich
environment for junior faculty. The criterion of the associate professor-
level were also identified in the open
recruitment process and discussions are
in progress with these candidates. In a parallel search, clinical research candidates have visited the university, and follow-up visits are being arranged for the fall.

I am pleased to announce that Jeff Freyer has agreed to chair the faculty search committee for next year. I want to emphasize how grateful we all are to

those who chair this committee; recruit-
ing new scientists is one of the most
important tasks of the university and it is also a great deal of work. Jeff will be experimenting with some modifications of the procedures used to
decide, which I hope will help the search
process work even better. Though the
 singles search committee, chaired by Jeff, will still evaluate a “shortlist” of finalists, the
work of screening initial candidates and in selecting the short list will be
outsourced by eight subcommittees, searching in specific research areas that together cover all the interests of the university. The
object of this hub-and-spokes model is
to encourage faculty and other members of the community to search for the
best candidates in their particular research areas which will then be discussed in the
more specialized subcommittees. The
qualified candidates will then be assessed
by the full committee, to identify who
will be the best hires for the university as a whole.

We are introducing this year a second closing date for applications. In addition to the regular November deadline, there will be an April deadline. The goal here is to be constantly on the lookout for potential candidates, as we can offer promising applications at any time throughout the year. Although we still expect most applications to come in by
November, this shift means that ef-
forts will continue to be on junior-level faculty looking to become assistant professors, but hopefully we will do the same for associate professor-level and early-career
tenured full professor-level candidates who are currently and research workers.

As in the last two years, all candidates will visit the university and give research

seminars, generally in the Monday Late
Series. I very much encourage every-
one to attend these lectures; not only do
they expose us to new and exciting work going on elsewhere, but I think the presence at these lectures has an enormously posi-
tive effect on our candidates. Good at-
tention, good research, and we have been
very pleased with the way our candidates have responded. I think that this has greatly helped our recruitment efforts.

I want to end this column on recruit-
ment by reminding you that as outlined
earlier, we will still occasionally appoint visiting part-time professors. The administration has been talking over the summer to an estab-
lished professor, identified by several of our physics and theoretically minded colleagues, who has a strong program in science.

We are also very pleased with the way to do scientific research, and hope-
fully that will lead to some significant
cientific discoveries that will really have
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Research Center. “Debt service levels will continue to rise over the coming years as we borrow additional money for the CRC but will be covered by other revenue sources within the university’s budget,” Mr. Lappe says. About half of the money for the CRC is coming from bonds, the interest on which is exceptionally low
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by TALLEY HENNING BROWN

Software bugs revealed during upgrades this summer caused unusual interruptions in e-mail service

The two Sun Microsystems servers that process and deliver the university’s e-mail look and perform a lot like any other desktop computer: a plastic box, a few fans, a processor, some memory. But they have an enormous workload: Together they handle more than 400,000 new e-mails every day and store about 500 gigabytes of e-mail. The numbers are average for an operation this size, but they are 25 percent higher than the figures from just six years ago.

For those six years, the system handled the steep increase nearly flawlessly. With routine software and hardware upgrades, these two boxes have been running more or less nonstop since 2001. When one needed to be taken offline for maintenance, the other automatically absorbed its workload. An additional backup in the university’s disaster recovery site provided another layer of redundancy.

Then, this summer, the streak came to an end.

The series of campus-wide interruptions in e-mail service, which started on June 17, began during a scheduled overhaul, when Information Technology personnel replaced those servers and upgraded two Sun e-mail applications that monitor the systems that receive, store and deliver Rockefeller’s e-mail. Despite extensive predeployment testing, bugs in the updated software caused first severe slowdowns in system response time and later intermittent full system freezes.

What followed was an intensive investigation by IT, as well as the vendors that provide the software, to pinpoint and patch the flawed code. The work began three weeks later, during which time IT staff was working at full capacity, even leveraging personnel who were on vacation to monitor the system remotely and help fix outages as they happened to ensure downtime was kept to a minimum.

But when the upgrade was finished — on the new hardware, with all new software — the situation instead worsened, causing the system to occasionally freeze entirely. All three vendors then began to investigate more closely, comparing snapshots of data collected from each of their systems over the same time periods to see how the systems were interacting.

“The problem turned out to be unrelated, it automatically deleted,” says Mr. Latter. “It does illustrate why we suggest that people quarantine their spam instead of having it automatically deleted,” says Mr. Latter. The problem turned out to be unrelated, but it added an additional layer of confusion for many users.

By the end of July, things began looking up. Sendmail and Veritas both discovered additional bugs in their software and worked to provide patches to address them. The patches worked, and the problems were repaired in the early morning hours of August 16. There has been no unplanned downtime since.

“Unfortunately, you never know exactly how new software will interact with the full production environment you’ve got until you put it all together and run under load. We experienced an unusual amount of bad luck during the course of what should have been a routine upgrade, but encountering bugs is itself not unusual, and the vendors were all very diligent in working to resolve them,” says Mr. Latter. “We’ve also gained some valuable lessons that will enable us to stress-test the system before future upgrades.”

Over the next several months, IT will proceed with existing plans to evaluate and test additional enhancements to help ensure the university’s e-mail systems remain stable. Under consideration: a migration to an open-source Linux operating system running on more powerful computers.

“This wouldn’t work if we had to be entirely compatible with earlier this year, but now we’re very promising,” says Mr. Latter. “This combination offers several advantages in terms of future upgradeability and improved support conditions, because we’ll be leveraging hardware and software that are both standard and cutting-edge.”

Friday lectures under way

This year’s program, which began September 7, brings 30 speakers from some of the world’s top universities and institutions to Rockefeller for the university’s weekly lecture series.

October 5
Allan C. Spradling
director, department of embryology, Carnegie Institution of Washington
William H. M. Stewart Memorial Lecture

October 12
Blaise Aguirre Arcas
architect, Microsoft Live Labs

October 19
Michael Snyder
cchair of molecular, cellular and developmental biology, Yale University

October 26
Timothy A. Ryan
professor of biochemistry, Wall Medical College of Cornell University
M.D.-Ph.D. Rackham Lecture

November 2
Jennifer Lippincott-Schwartz
principal investigator, cell biology and metabolism branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health

November 9
Cecilia de Moraes
professor of entomology, Pennsylvania State University

November 16
Nathanial Hoita
James and Marilyn Simmons Professor and head, Laboratory of Molecular Biology, The Rockefeller University
M.D.-Ph.D. Rackham Lecture

November 30
Ronald Breake
associate professor of molecular, cellular and developmental biology, Yale University

December 7
Catherine Dulac
Hugo Theorell Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology, Harvard University

December 14
Jennifer A. Doudina
professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, University of California, Berkeley

January 4
James Ferrer
professor of biochemistry and chair, chemical and systems biology, Stanford University
Jerry A. Warkish Memorial Lecture

January 11
Andrew Murray
professor of molecular and cellular biology, Harvard University
Philip Levine Memorial Lecture

January 18
Kevan Shokat
professor and chair of cellular and molecular pharmacology, University of California, San Francisco; assistant professor of chemistry, UC Berkeley

January 25
Elliot M. Meyerowitz
professor and chair, biology division, California Institute of Technology

February 1
David Kingsley
professor of developmental biology, Stanford University
Richard M. Fairbanks Distiguished Lecture

February 8
L. David Mech
adjunct professor of fishes, wildlife and conservation biology, University of Minnesota; honor scientist, biological resources, U.S. Geological Survey

February 15
Frederick Alt
principal investigator, Vollum Institute, Oregon Health and Science University

February 22
Roger Kornberg
professor of structural biology, Stanford University
Joshua A. Lederberg Distiguished Lecture

February 29
Eric Gouaux
principal investigator, William Inman, Oregon Health and Science University

March 7
C. David Allis
Joy and Jack Fishman Professor and head, Laboratory of Chromatin Biology and Epigenetics, The Rockefeller University
Ph.D. Recruitment Lecture

March 14
Stavros Lefther
Gladys T. Pechin Professor and head, Laboratory of Living Matter, The Rockefeller University
Ph.D. Recruitment Lecture

March 21
Joseph Takahashi
Walter and Mary Elise Glaz Professor, department of neurobiology and physiology, Northwestern University

March 28
Louis Piatrek
John C. Coleman Distinguished Professor in Neurogenetic Disease, University of California, San Francisco

April 4
Wiley Prize in Biomedical Sciences

April 11
Patricia Kohl
professor, department of speech and hearing sciences and codirector, Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences, University of Washington
Marylyn McCarty Memorial Lecture

April 18
Edward and May-Britt Moser
codirectors, Kavli Institute for System Neuroscience, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

April 25
Beth Stevens
professor of theoretical physics, University of California, Santa Barbara

May 2
Evolution Symposium

May 9
Stephen O’Brien
professor and head, department of clinical biochemistry and medicine, University of Cambridge

May 16
Science Symposium in honor of Mary Jeanne Kreek

May 23
James Wolfs
head of cellular and molecular pharmacology and pharmacu- tical chemistry, University of California, San Francisco
Cancer Biology Lecture

May 30
Dana Drubin
head of cell and developmental biology, University of California, Berkeley

June 6
Gary Ruvkin
professor of genetics, Harvard Medical School/Massachusetts General Hospital
Promotions (academic appointments):

- Lynn Dustin, from research assistant professor to research associate professor, Rice Lab.
- Taeun Eom, from postdoctoral associate to research associate, Robert Darnell Lab.
- Geraldine Guasch, from postdoctoral associate to postdoctoral associate, Fuchs Lab.
- Andre Hoelz, from postdoctoral fellow to Blobl, Lab.
- Deepthi Jayamohan, from research associate to research associate, D’Donnell Lab.
- Francine Katz, from postdoctoral associate to research associate, D’Donnell Lab.
- Andreas Keller, from postdoctoral associate to research associate, Vosshall Lab.

Promotions (staff appointments):

- Haifeng Feng, from HR to senior HR specialist.
- Bethany Francis, from Archivist, Center to assistant project archivist.
- Evagelia Papadimas, from research assistant, Steinman Lab.
- Matthew Baron, from research assistant, Greengard Lab.
- Thania G. Benios, from science writer, Communications and Public Affairs.
- Deepthi Jayamohan, from research associate to research associate, D’Donnell Lab.
- Janice Asciano, from postdoctoral associate, Roeder Lab.
- Melissa LeBasseur, from the Rockefeller University Press to Ph.D. news editor.
- Martin Leidner, from Information Technology to project manager, chief information security officer.
- Alexander MacWhir, from the Rockefeller University Press to production editor JEM.
- Shauna O’Garro, from the Rockefeller University Press to assistant production editor.
- Jennifer Peterson, from Mauer Library to laboratory administrator.
- Clifford Phillips, from Housing Scholars Residence to doorman.
- Maureen Pullin, from Hospital Nursing Outpatient to nurse manager.
- Alexia Pomaies, from Child and Family Center to head teacher.
- Marios Rodriguez, from LARC to LARC supervisor.
- Michael Rosner, from the Rockefeller University Press to executive director.
- Peter Taylor, from LARC to LARC group leader.
- Brian Treanor, from Security to sergant.
- Martha Vasquez, from Hospital Bioinformaton, to metabolic scientist.
- Patricia Wills-Abrahams, from Planning and Construction, to administrative manager.
- Ekaterina Zafranovski, from Targeting Center, to research support specialist.

Hired:

- Owen Albin, from research assistant, Rice Lab.
- Luiz Aleguin, from bioinonmati, to Bioinomation.
- Muayad Almahairi, from research assistant, Heintz Lab.
- Brandy Antonio, from teacher, to Child and Family Center.
- Geoffrey Appelboim, from postdoctoral associate, Greengard Lab.
- Janice Asciano, from postdoctoral associate, Roeder Lab.
- Matthew Baron, from research assistant, Greengard Lab.
- Thania G. Benios, from science writer, to Communications and Public Affairs.
- Debabrata Biswas, from postdoctoral fellow, Roeder Lab.
- Ellen Bradley, from research assistant, Rice Lab.
- Freddy Casado, from porter, to Housing Faculty House.
- Sue Mei Cheah, from research assistant, Greengard Lab.
- Hyun Koh, from research assistant, Steinman Lab.

Milestones

- Budapest in December.
- Hungary, Officer’s Cross, from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to research associate, Vosshall Lab.
- W. Bush at the White House on July 27.
- research associate, Blobel Lab.
- to research associate, Steller Lab.
- Stephen Nelson, from LARC to LARC group leader.
- Melissa Offenhartz, from Hospital Nursing Administration, to director of nursing and patient care services.
- Shauna O’Garro, from the Rockefeller University Press to production editor JEM.
- Jennifer Peterson, from Mauer Library to laboratory administrator.
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On the wing. Photos taken by Anne Nurse, wife of President Paul Nurse, show, clockwise from top left, eastern tiger swallowtail, monarch, cardinol black and white and black swallowtail butterflies in gardens at the President’s House. As part of campus-wide green initiatives, butterfly gardens were planted this spring in front of the President’s House and in the corner lot between the hospital and Gasser Hall. At least eight species of butterfly have been spotted on campus, including those above as well as admiral, orange sulfur, tortoiseshell and speckled woodswallow.