



**Academic Affairs Committee  
November 11, 2025**

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**Information Item**

AAC – 4 Update on Research and Engagement

The UNCG Division of Research and Engagement provides strategic direction and guided support to faculty, research staff, and students for research, scholarship, and creative endeavors resulting in funded grants, contracts, innovation, and community engagement leading to knowledge production, student experiences, public impact, and economic prosperity.

**FY25 Research and Sponsored Programs Awards**

The Division of Research and Engagement continues to strengthen UNCG’s research enterprise and expand opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to engage in high-impact discovery. Research activity in FY26 Quarter 1 reflects strong engagement despite a national funding contraction. While total award dollars (\$15.3M) and number of awards (66) are lower than FY25 Q1 (\$22.9M; 89 awards), proposal submissions increased from 108 to 117, showing continued faculty momentum. This reduction is attributed to shifts in agency priorities, program eliminations, and fewer large-scale opportunities at the federal level. Many available opportunities in Q1 were foundation-based, offering smaller award sizes.

**Analysis and Justification:** While the number of **awards and total award dollars** in FY26 Q1 are lower than the same period last year, several external factors explain this temporary fluctuation:

**1. Shifts in Federal Agency Priorities**

Multiple funding agencies adjusted or suspended programs in late FY25 and early FY26 due to evolving national priorities and reallocation of funds toward emerging areas such as artificial intelligence and defense-related research and development. These shifts reduced available opportunities in other established research domains where UNCG faculty have traditionally been highly competitive.

**2. Program Eliminations and Funding Realignment**

Some agencies and federal programs experienced **budget rescissions and consolidation**, resulting in fewer or smaller awards. This contraction particularly affected mid-sized investigator-initiated programs and multi-institutional initiatives that historically supported a large portion of UNCG’s early-career investigators.

### 3. Increased Focus on Foundation Funding

The Division has worked proactively with the campus community to **diversify the funding portfolio**, including growing submissions to private foundations. Foundation programs tend to offer smaller awards compared to federal grants; however, they provide valuable seed funding that strengthens competitiveness for larger federal opportunities. The higher number of FY26 submissions (117 vs. 108) reflects increased engagement across campus even as total dollars are temporarily lower.

### 4. Anticipated Government Shutdown Impacts

The federal government shutdown has already delayed **review panels, award processing, and new solicitation timelines**, which is expected to further slow award notifications in FY26 Q2. Despite this, UNCG's early submission activity positions the institution to capitalize quickly once normal operations resume.

Despite these trends, UNCG is still on track to achieve the annual metrics to maintain a trajectory toward R1 classification, which is planned for the next cycle in February 2028. Future growth may be moderated by anticipated delays in federal grant reviews due to a potential government shutdown, but overall research engagement remains robust and strategically aligned for long-term success.

### Recent Highlights

**New Grant to Study Sand Flies:** Dr. Gideon Wasserberg, Professor of Biology, was awarded a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) titled "*Behavioral, microbial, and chemical ecology of sand fly oviposition site selection*" in the amount of \$3.67M. Dr. Wasserberg's work focuses on **understanding how to stop disease-carrying sand flies, which** are small insects that can spread several serious diseases, including leishmaniasis, a tropical disease that affects millions of people worldwide. Unlike mosquitoes, sand flies spend their entire life on land. One important species, *Phlebotomus papatasi*, lives in the burrows of desert rodents. These burrows provide the flies with protection and a place to breed, making them a key point in the sand fly's life cycle, and a potential weak spot that could be used to control them. Dr. Wasserberg's lab is studying what makes these burrows so attractive to sand flies. They believe that a combination of odors and microbes from the rodent, its waste, and the surrounding environment draw the flies inside. By understanding these chemical and biological signals, the team hopes to create a special lure that attracts female sand flies looking for places to lay eggs. This could lead to new, environmentally friendly traps that help reduce sand fly populations and prevent the spread of disease.

**UNCG Selected as a Site for the Warfighter to Soldier Program:** The UNCG Institute for the Convergence of Optimizing Methods for Military Advances for National Defense (iCOMMAND) is positioning the university as a state and national leader in workforce development for defense innovation. In partnership with BioMADE, a Defense Manufacturing Innovation Institute, UNCG was selected as the first site in North Carolina to host the Warfighter-to-Scientist Workshop, a two-week program that demonstrated how academic, industry, and defense communities can work together to prepare military-affiliated individuals for scientific and technical careers. This national demonstration site showcased BioMADE's vision of building pathways from defense service to discovery science, while reinforcing North Carolina's capacity to lead in bioindustrial manufacturing and biotechnology education. The workshop's success has positioned UNCG as the preferred North Carolina site for future BioMADE training programs, and as the foundation for a statewide Warfighter-to-Scientist initiative that can engage military installations, veterans, and educators across the region.

**UNCG Faculty and Research Scholars Named Among the Top 2% Worldwide:** Over 40 faculty and research scholars have been recognized among the top 2% of scholars and scientists worldwide, based on a comprehensive analysis of standardized citation metrics across scientific fields. The honorees represent a broad cross-section of UNCG's strengths including health and human sciences, the life sciences, nanoscience, business and economics, and dance. The listing recognizes both career-long and single-year research influence through a composite of widely used metrics and field-normalized indicators. UNCG's honorees span emerging and established scholars whose work advances university priorities in areas such as health and wellness, child development, machine learning, advanced materials and composites, natural products research, AI and data-enabled discovery, education, environmental sustainability, and humanities. A full roster of UNCG honorees and their academic units is available from the Division of Research & Engagement.



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J. Alan Boyette  
Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor

# UNCG Research and Engagement



## Health and Science Research

NIH invests \$3.66M in UNCG's research fight against sand fly transmitted diseases

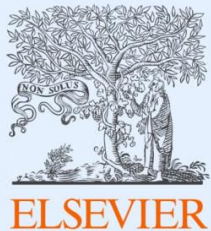


## Resilience in Education Research

Building the future of learning: The SERVE center's \$11.3M research-driven impact on K-12 education

## Global Recognition

40 UNCG faculty and researchers have been named as top 2% scholars in the world



**TOP 2%**  
**SCIENTISTS**  
LEADING MINDS IN SCIENCE

