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## Private gifts boosting U. of I. as state funding shrinks

*Professor's \$1 million donation helps support pest control efforts worldwide*

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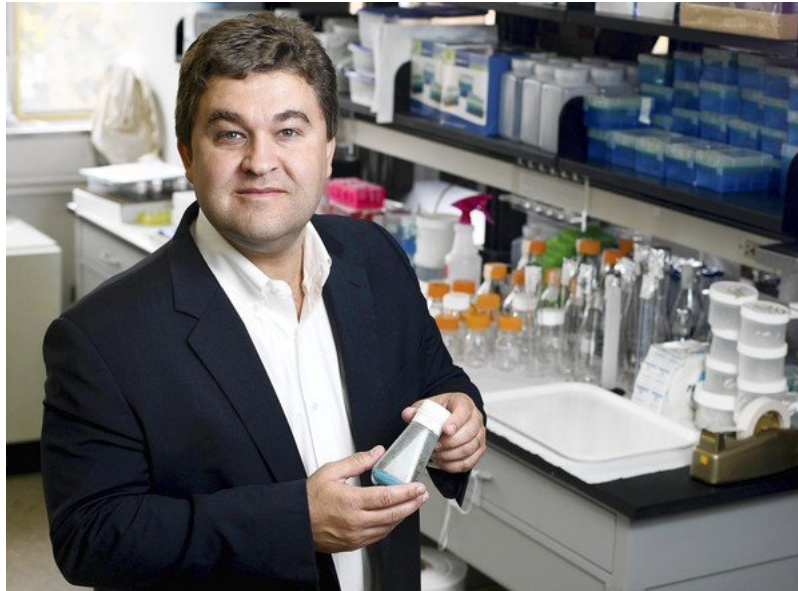


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A private donation helped the University of Illinois attract entomology professor Barry Pittendrigh, then a Purdue University professor, to move to the U. of I. (Ben Woloszyn, Chicago Tribune / October 2, 2012)

By Jodi S. Cohen, Chicago Tribune reporter

October 2, 2012

Growing up on a farm in Missouri, Roy Barker watched as flies, grasshoppers and other insects destroyed his family's

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As a graduate student at the University of Illinois, he was motivated by that childhood concern to study insect control, particularly how to eradicate pests more safely.

Decades after he graduated, Barker, concerned that the U. of I. was neglecting the field of insect toxicology, donated slightly more than \$1 million to establish an endowed faculty position in the subject, ensuring that the university could hire a top researcher in the field.

In an era when cash-conscious public universities are constantly weighing competing needs, U. of I. officials are pointing to Barker's gift as a prime example of how they are increasingly relying on private giving as state money has declined. A report released last week by the National Science Board found that Illinois' per-student funding for public universities has declined 37 percent since 2002, when adjusted for inflation.

"It's been a relentless decline," said Phyllis Wise, chancellor of the Urbana-Champaign campus. "As a public university, we are relying on private support more and more."

Barker's gift, for example, helped the university entice entomology professor Barry Pittendrigh, then a Purdue University professor, to move to the U. of I. in 2008. Pittendrigh's research focuses on minimizing the number of insects that attack cowpea, similar to black-eyed peas, a main source of protein in some West African countries.

U. of I. professor May Berenbaum, head of the entomology department who helped secure the gift, said the path from Barker's farm to West Africa shows the power of successful alumni who are able to give back. When Barker's farm was plagued by insects, a local 4-H Club gave him a book, "Destructive and Useful Insects," written by two U. of I. professors. The endowed faculty position created with his donation is named after those two professors and a third who influenced him.

Barker, who lived in Tucson, Ariz., and died earlier this year, received his Ph.D. in entomology from the U. of I. in 1953 and spent his career working in research labs for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and in industry. He endowed the faculty chair position in 2001.

"Every dollar is precious; every one in every unit feels that his or her hire is the best thing for the university. So the fact that a donor was willing to give a large sum of money because of the importance of the field helped make the case," Berenbaum said. "It has been an incredible opportunity. It is hard to even count the ways that it has enhanced our ability to provide cutting-edge research in this area."

Private gifts to the university are down slightly from a peak of \$224 million in 2009. The university brought in \$211 million last fiscal year, which ended June 30, according to figures released last week.

Meanwhile state funding has been declining steadily. The U. of I. system's three campuses expect to receive about \$622 million in general revenue funds from the state this year, down from \$701 million a decade ago. The decline is starker when adjusted for inflation. U. of I.'s budget this year is about \$5.4 billion.

The recent report by the National Science Board, the governing body for the National Science Foundation, found that Illinois' 37 percent decline in per-student funding was the fourth-largest cut in the country. The state spent \$7,566 for each public university student enrolled during the 2009-10 academic year, the 28th highest amount in the country, according to the report. The \$211 million in donations to U. of I. last year came from 142,000 gifts, university officials announced last week. The largest share came from corporations. Some of the money can be used immediately, while other donations are spread out over time, similar to the funding that established the endowed faculty position in insect toxicology.

That gift helps fund some of Pittendrigh's salary, and provides about \$20,000 a year in discretionary funding. Pittendrigh has used that money to start an initiative aimed at developing computer animations to educate citizens around the world about how to safely eradicate pests that threaten their crops.

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Pittendrigh and his students develop the animations, then transmit them to citizens in West Africa using cellphone technology and DVDs. He started the program, called Scientific Animations Without Borders, after realizing he needed a visual way to explain the pest-control techniques to people who speak various languages and have varying levels of literacy.

One video, for example, explains how farmers can make a chemical-free solution using seeds and water to spray on the crops.

Pittendrigh said the additional funding provided him the "flexibility to try out these new things and get this program kick-started." There are 152 endowed faculty chairs across the university's three campuses.

"Typically, the flexible resources to take these risks are difficult to come by without a chair position," he said. "This has allowed us to produce videos that help save peoples' lives."

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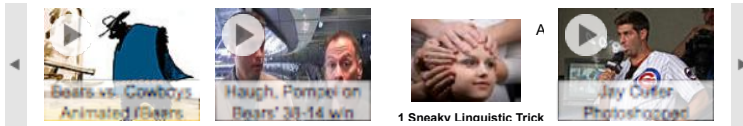
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