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In focus: Research at Princeton

by Eric Quiñones · Posted July 15, 2005; 10:43 a.m.

Princeton University is unique in combining the strengths of a major research university with the qualities of an outstanding liberal arts college. Pushing the frontiers of knowledge and addressing real-world problems, Princeton scientists and scholars publish research across the spectrum of intellectual inquiry.

The [University Research Board](#) and its administrative arm, the [Office of Research and Project Administration](#), oversee the solicitation, acceptance and administration of research grants from government and other sources. They also manage the patenting and licensing of discoveries made in Princeton labs.

According to the research board's [annual report \(pdf\)](#):

- In 2003-04, researchers on campus conducted \$142 million in sponsored research, an increase of \$4 million from the previous year. In addition, researchers at the Princeton Plasma Physics Lab conducted \$71.3 million in research funded primarily by the U.S. Department of Energy.
- The largest source of research funding at Princeton was the U.S. government, which provided \$105 million toward 686 projects (not including the Plasma Physics Lab). The National Institutes of Health provided \$39 million in funding, while the National Science Foundation funded \$29 million in projects.
- Molecular biology had the highest level of any department in sponsored research funding with \$27.4 million in expenditures. The physics department had \$11.5 million in research projects. Total expenditures for sponsored research at the School of Engineering and Applied Science were \$40 million.
- The Office of Technology Licensing received 93 invention disclosures from faculty and staff members and filed 98 patent applications. The U.S. Patent Office issued 27 patents during 2003-04 for inventions made at Princeton. The University entered 24 license and option agreements with companies for the commercial development of Princeton inventions.

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Members of Princeton's class of 2008 — (from left) Bill Foran, Sian Ofaolain and Michael Wang — used a tensile test instrument to test polymer materials for a freshman seminar taught by Ilhan Aksay, professor of chemical engineering. Entitled "Materials World," the course covers the evolution of materials, from those humankind first made to those created for the latest electronic applications. In this seminar students evaluate bio-inspired methods for synthesizing new materials and explore the possibility of using these materials to develop new technologies.

Photo: Denise Applewhite