

## FAU gets \$8.75 million for ocean energy research

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BOCA RATON — State lawmakers have earmarked \$8.75 million for Florida Atlantic University's ocean energy research project and included the Boca Raton school in a new consortium charged with finding alternative energy sources for the Sunshine State.

University officials learned of the proposed allocation Monday, following weekend budget negotiations in Tallahassee.

"We're ecstatic," said FAU lobbyist Tom Barlow. "The economy is not very strong and for the legislature to put this together shows they want to look at solutions to the energy problem."

The \$8.75 million is less than the \$10 million that Gov. Charlie Crist had proposed giving FAU's Ocean Energy Technology Center this year.

Still, researchers said the money will help further the center's main projects, which include placing a turbine in the Gulf Stream to create energy, using deep ocean water as an air conditioner for coastal areas and generating energy from extreme temperature differences that naturally occur in the ocean.

Although harnessing ocean energy has been considered for more than a century, no system has been installed in the Gulf Stream for more than a few hours.

"We're certainly honored that the governor and legislature see the potential in this program," said Howard Hanson, FAU's associate vice president for research.

FAU also was named to the proposed Florida Energy Systems Consortium, which is expected to generate collaboration between universities to increase energy conservation projects.

FAU's ocean energy center, which is based in Dania Beach, was created in 2006 with \$5 million in state "Centers of Excellence" funding.

Traditionally, schools have competed for the money each year by proposing different research projects. The Board of Governors, which oversees Florida's 11 public universities, would dole out the money based on the merit of each program.

This year, there was \$87 million in the budget to pay for new Centers of Excellence, and the board paid \$200,000 to an independent scientific group to rank the projects.

But lawmakers decided instead to use the majority of the Centers of Excellence money to pay for energy-related research at a handful of schools, including the University of Florida, Florida State University, the University of South Florida and the University of Central Florida. None of the five proposals that FAU sent this year was ranked for funding by the independent firm.

Lawmakers did award money to the two projects that the firm ranked highest. Florida International University's hurricane research program was given \$10 million, and FSU's Center for Advanced Aero-Propulsion got \$14.5 million.