

University of Iowa engineering institutes must give 'indirect' research funds to college

National Advanced Driving Simulator, IHR and Iowa Technology Institute will lose funds that came to \$6.3 million this year

IOWA CITY — The University of Iowa is changing the way three successful engineering institutes have been funded, cutting funds that added up to \$6.3 million this year.

The UI's National Advanced Driving Simulator, IHR-Hydroscience and Engineering and the Iowa Technology Institute no longer will be allowed to keep the [Faculties & Administrative money](#) that comes with grants and contracts. Under the plan approved by Engineering Dean Harriet Nembhard, those funds will be shifted to the college.

"At Iowa, all collegiate units, except the College of Engineering, follow a model where in a portion of the F & A returns, often referred to as 'indirects,' are held at the university level to cover the overhead of university operations," Nembhard wrote to The Gazette. "Engineering will now be brought into alignment with this same model over a period of time and contribute to university operations in the same way as every other college on campus."

Nembhard, [hired in December](#), said in an email to institute staff that their units have garnered many grants and contracts, broken scientific ground and aided government programs.

"Our research centers have helped to foster large-scale collaborations and engineering contributions in driving simulation, flood prevention, female body armor and persistent organic pollutants — just to name a few," she told The Gazette.

[IIHR](#), which just celebrated its 100th anniversary, was part of a project that got [\\$97 million from U.S. Housing and Urban Development in 2016](#) to study the watershed approach to reducing flood risk. The Iowa Flood Center, which is part of IIHR, has been a [model for other states](#) looking to understand future flood risks.

The [National Advanced Driving Simulator](#) has brought in public and private grants for [research on autonomous cars](#), [impaired driving](#) and [road design](#).

The Iowa Technology Institute probably is most well known for its [Virtual Soldier Research Program](#), which does research and development on human modeling and simulation. Santos, a physics-based human simulator, is used by the U.S. military and industry partners. Institute partners [recently won other grants](#) for COVID-19 testing technology and laser materials processing.

Nembhard she said she doesn't anticipate there will be layoffs or furloughs at the institutes, but she still is meeting with the leaders.

"At this point, it's hard to foresee what the future is going to look like because there aren't a lot of details to work off," IIHR Director Gabriele Villarini said. "This is a major change in how we've operated for 100 years."

NADS Director Dan McGehee said he thinks the UI will want to make sure the simulator — the largest public complex in the world — remains competitive.

"The NADS has operated independently without UI, state or federal support for its operation for over 20 years," he said. "We receive our funding from competitive research contracts from industry and government."

The institutes now will be eligible for research cost-share and bridge funding programs that weren't available previously, the UI said.

The UI [announced major budget cuts in July](#) after the Iowa Legislature reduced state funding to the UI by \$8 million. As part of that, the UI Engineering College laid off four staffers. The college [still is trying to reach its fundraising target](#) of \$17 million for the \$37.1 million Seamans Center annex, completed in 2017.

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