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UNM, Sandia agree to more joint research

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By [ABQnews Staff](#)

PUBLISHED: Monday, July 13, 2015 at 11:34 am

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Paul Hommert, Sandia National Laboratories President and Laboratories Director, left, and Chaouki Abdallah, University of New Mexico Provost, trade papers as they sign a new agreement to strengthen their research collaboration and jointly hire faculty and research staff. (Greg Sorber/Albuquerque Journal)

The University of New Mexico and Sandia National Laboratories are expanding their collaboration on research and efforts to recruit top scientists.

Sandia President and Director Paul Hommert and University of New Mexico Provost Chaouki Abdallah signed a new memorandum of understanding Monday at the university's Centennial Engineering Center.

Sandia and UNM agreed to look for collaborative research opportunities, jointly recruit and hire prominent researchers and explore strategies on engineering as it relates to national security, according to a news release from Sandia.

The research will focus initially on quantum computing and information science, nanoscience and microsystems engineering, nuclear engineering, high energy density science, energy, water, cybersecurity and bioscience for national security.

"In research, as in real estate, location is key! Not many research universities have a national lab as their neighbor, but we do. This agreement with Sandia Labs strengthens that close working partnership and pools our intellectual resources," UNM President Robert G. Frank said in a statement on the agreement.

The agreement also makes UNM part of a larger alliance Sandia has formed over the past year. About 2,400 UNM graduates work at Sandia, many in technical areas vital to national security. More than 400 current UNM students are working at the labs.

The agreement will encourage exchanges among researchers, faculty and students who will share offices and other facilities.

It replaces one signed in 2011 that was set to expire next year.

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In recent years, joint research has led to the development of inorganic nanospheres that act as carriers for cancer-killing chemicals, collaborative work on quantum computing featured in several journals and other innovations. Overall, Sandia and UNM have undertaken more than 300 joint research projects since 1997.

The organizations share the Advanced Materials Laboratory in UNM's Science and Technology Park, supporting collaboration among Sandia, UNM and industry in materials research, development and transfer to private companies for commercialization.

Sandia and UNM also work together through an agreement that allows joint work without formal agreements or the need for UNM to use a project-specific research contract to have Sandia staff run experiments at the labs.

Joint UNM faculty/Sandia technical staff appointments include Fernando Garzon, a recognized expert in materials science and engineering and the first professor recruited together by Sandia and UNM. Sandia researchers Jeff Brinker and Rick Kemp also work for UNM as professors through joint appointments.

Sandia has also formed academic alliances in the past year with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Purdue University and the Georgia Institute of Technology.

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