

# Navy contract could be worth nearly \$1 billion to UT

## University's Applied Research Laboratories is a mainstay of sonar research and development.

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**The U.S. Navy has awarded a 10-year contract that could be worth nearly \$1 billion to the Applied Research Laboratories at the University of Texas for development of sonar equipment and other technologies.**

The contract, with a ceiling of \$928 million, does not guarantee the money, but the university has had no problem reaching the ceiling of four previous multiyear research and development contracts with the Navy. The previous contract, for five years of work, totaled \$302 million.

"They've been doing great work," said David Sivillo, a senior official of the Navy's Naval Sea Systems Command. "The technical sponsors of the work want them back."

The Applied Research Laboratories is the largest, in both budget and personnel, of more than 200 research units at UT.

Based at the J.J. Pickle Research Campus in North Austin, with a field-testing station on Lake Travis near Mansfield Dam, the labs employ 300 scientists and engineers. As a result of the new Navy contract, that roster is expected to expand to 400 to 450 in 10 years.

Entry-level positions pay in the range of \$60,000 a year, and senior staff members earn six-figure salaries. At any given time, 100 to 150 students are working at the labs.

"Our salaries are competitive with just about anyone in town in terms of industry," said Clark Penrod, director of the labs. "We compete against National Instruments, for example, in recruiting for talent, so we have to pay salaries consistent with theirs."

Established in 1946, the labs have been developing sonar and acoustic equipment for the Navy for much of their history.

Projects under the new contract will include high-resolution sonar to enable submarines to avoid obstacles and sea mines, swimmer-detection sonar and satellite-navigation technology.

Although the new contract began in late April, it was not announced publicly until UT President William Powers Jr. made a brief mention in a speech last week. UT's research office disclosed details Wednesday.

Penrod said he believed that this was the largest multiyear research contract in the university's history.

"It's a solid indication of something I already knew: that the Navy continues to think of us as a strategic partner in a lot of what they do," Penrod said. "That's an important role for universities. They're able to bring high-quality technical expertise and an unbiased point of view that industry can't offer to solve different problems."

### **R&D for the Navy**

Projects to be funded at UT's Applied Research Laboratories include:

High-resolution sonar to enable submarines to avoid obstacles and sea mines.

High-resolution sonar to inspect ship hulls for explosives.

Improved swimmer-detection sonar.

New antenna technology for radio communications.

Improved signal processing for acoustic detection and submarine tracking.

Artificial intelligence technology that could be used to predict terrorist and cyber attacks.

Improved technology for satellite navigation and global positioning systems.

Source: University of Texas

**Courtesy of JB Goodwin**