

CNSF

Coalition for National Science Funding

1527 Eighteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20036

(202) 588-1100

www.cnsfweb.org

October 20, 2005

Honorable Joshua B. Bolten, Director
Office of Management and Budget
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, Room 252
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Bolten:

The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF), an organization of over 100 science, engineering, and professional societies, universities and businesses advocating for the National Science Foundation (NSF), encourages you to support an FY 2007 budget of \$6 billion for the NSF.

The Congress and the Administration realized in 2002 that the NSF was funded at an inadequate level and passed Public Law 107-368 to remedy this problem. This law proposed a plan to double the NSF budget in five years beginning with the FY 2003 budget. However, since the 2002 NSF Authorization Act, the NSF budget has actually decreased in constant dollars (see enclosed graph). Rather than increasing the U.S. investment in the NSF, as Public Law 107-368 suggests we should, we are moving backwards! The FY 2005 NSF budget of \$5.47 billion is less than the FY 2003 authorized budget of \$5.54 billion. The FY 2006 NSF budgets, currently in play (House, Senate, Administration request), are all lower than NSF's actual FY 2004 budget (\$5.65 billion), and the Senate's recommendation is lower than the FY 2003 authorized budget.

American leadership in science and technology is being challenged as never before as other nations place ever-increasing emphasis on generating more scientists and engineers, research, and R&D infrastructure, and improving educational achievement of their citizens. For example, the U.S. is graduating around 65,000 engineers a year, while China graduates over 200,000 per year and India over 80,000 per year and these numbers are growing. Recently a proposal of the Commission of the European Communities stated: "Europe needs more researchers in order to increase and improve its research efforts. Alongside other actions, such as the European Charter for Researchers and national policy measures, the 7th Framework Programme is designed to stimulate more people to embark upon and pursue research careers, and once again attract leading research talent to Europe."

The NSF plays a critical role in maintaining U.S. global preeminence in science and technological innovation. Current NSF funding policies, if not changed, will eventually cause a loss of U.S. leadership in science and technology innovation and impede our ability to compete globally.

We are cognizant of other federal budget pressures, however the lack of real growth in the NSF budget is stifling the agency's ability to support the needed technological infrastructure that leads to scientific and technical success. Moreover, this decline in investment jeopardizes the security of our nation and its future prosperity. It is estimated that NSF support of senior researchers, other professionals, undergraduate students, and K-12 students and teachers will drop approximately 26 percent from FY 2004 to FY 2006. In addition to adverse impacts on the pace of new scientific discoveries, constrained funding has equally dire consequences to the vitality of the

nation's scientific workforce. Constrained funding decreases job opportunities for current and future scientists, reduces the attractiveness of science as a career choice, and consequently, weakens the talent pool from which U.S. corporations and government can draw.

NSF-supported research has had a monumental impact on our society. The NSF investment has been essential in building the infrastructure of the individual scientific disciplines, as well as laying the groundwork for innovative interdisciplinary research to meet modern-day scientific and technical challenges and opportunities. Many new methods and products arise from the NSF investment in research, such as geographic information systems, World Wide Web search engines (Google), automatic heart defibrillators, product bar codes, computer aided modeling (CAD/CAM), retinal implants, optical fiber, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology, and composite materials used in aircraft. These innovations contribute to the prosperity and quality of life of all Americans. Failing to increase funding for fundamental research will slow the development of solutions to many of the problems we face now and in the near-term future -- problems such as earthquake prediction, development of alternate energy resources and efficient energy storage devices, ultra-secure networks, and high-speed DNA sequencing.

As you move forward with assembling the FY 2007 budget, CNSF urges you to fund the NSF at \$6 billion. Anything less will result in a weakened agency, with insufficient resources to keep pace with other nations' increasingly successful emulation of former U.S. commitments to basic research. There are few other federal investments as strategically important as the NSF is to U.S. well-being and strength.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Rankin, III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Samuel M. Rankin, III
Chair, CNSF