House Appropriations subcommittee reviews proposed FY 2016 NSF budget

March 17, 2015

On March 17, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies held a hearing on the President's fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget request for the National Science Foundation (NSF). Subcommittee Chairman John Culberson (R-TX) expressed his wish to eliminate politics from consideration of the NSF budget, but cautioned NSF Director France Córdova to ask herself "How would taxpayers react to this?" and to be conscious of NSF spending.

The President's FY 2016 NSF budget requests $7.7 billion, a 5.2 percent increase from the FY 2015 enacted budget. The increases are spread across NSF directorate programs including the Brain Research through Advancing Innovation and Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative; Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Energy, and Water Systems (INFEWS); work focusing on disaster resilience; and the NSF INCLUDES (Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners that have been Underrepresented for Diversity in Engineering and Science) initiative supporting diversity in STEM participation. The NSF budget requests $150 million for arctic research. Under the FY 2016 budget request, Geoscience Directorate (GEO) would receive $1.4 billion, a 4.7 percent increase from FY 2015. This budget request includes funding for two broader NSF initiatives in which geosciences plays a role, the PREEVENTS (Prediction of and Resilience against Extreme Events) which covers risk and resilience research on natural hazards, and INFEWS.

NSF does not submit a budget request with directorate-level funding numbers to Congress, but instead receives approval for an overall budget. Córdova reiterated her support for the current process of merit review, decadal reports, and community input that guides the NSF budget. The current budget system allows for greater cross-directorate flexibility, enabling directorates to work to together to leverage resources that support science.

Sources: AAAS, NSF