

NIH Does It Again

February 20, 2001

For the third year in a row, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) received a large double-digit increase in its annual budget. At a time when partisan rancor has been and will continue to be the hallmark of the deliberative process in the U.S. Congress, NIH is enjoying solid bipartisan support for the goal of doubling its budget between FY 98 and FY 03. In FY 2001, NIH, which is the federal government's leading source of funding for psychological science research and training, will have \$20.3 billion to spend this year. That's 14 percent over the FY 2000 budget.

Some may remember the excitement when NIH cracked the \$10 billion mark in 1993. Now we wonder how they managed to get along with so little.

NOT WHETHER, BUT HOW MUCH

Congressional support for NIH has become such a given that it's was never really a question of whether, but rather how much, of an increase the agency would get. The only real excitement came when a pre-election budget deal came undone after the election.

Before Congress left town in October, an "in-principle" appropriations agreement would have given NIH its customary 15 percent increase. But when Congress reconvened after the dust and chads settled in Florida, a few Republican leaders in the House rethought their position. Folks at NIH and in the field were on tenterhooks for a few weeks in November and December, but everyone's breathing again, because even though their budget took a 1 percent hit, NIH still ended up with a 14 percent increase for 2001. That's \$2.5 billion in crisp new money.

To give some perspective, though, the one percent decrease translates into a loss of \$200 million. You could do a lot of behavioral science with that.

Within NIH's 14 percent increase, most institutes will receive increases hovering around that size. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is slated for a 13.6 percent, which will bring the institute across the billion-dollar mark (to \$1.1 billion to be specific); the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) will get 13.7 percent, bringing it to \$781.3 million, and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) is due for a whopping 16.6 percent increase, which will bring the agency to \$340.7 million in FY 2001.

NSF FOLLOWS SUIT

Speaking of double digits, as we reported in the December 2000 *Observer*, the novelty this year was at the National Science Foundation (NSF), which got an unprecedented double-digit budget increase for fiscal year (FY) 2001. NSF, which supports large amounts of basic research in psychological science, will increase 13.3 percent, bringing the agency to \$4.42 billion, or more than \$522 million above the agency's FY 2000 budget. This could be the first of several large annual increases for NSF if its Congressional supporters are successful in reaching their goal of doubling the NSF budget in five years.

Within NSF, the news could be even better for behavioral and social science research, which could be increased as much as 19 percent if the agency's original budget request for those areas prevails.

SUPPORT FOR BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

The increases for NIH came with many supportive messages for behavioral and social science research. This continues an APS tradition over the past decade of convincing Congress to encourage NIH to do more in these areas. These efforts have helped lead to a number of initiatives at NIH, including behavioral research centers at NIMH, an expanded mission for the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, and increased support for young behavioral science investigators across NIH, to name just a few.

Among many highlights this year is the Senate (S. Rpt. 106-293, p. 142) urging the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) to begin supporting behavioral science research and training. NIGMS is known informally as the basic research institute, and APS has been asking the Institute to expand its portfolio to basic research in our field.

Other issues APS highlighted in our formal and informal contacts with Congress on the NIH budget included the following:

- Translational research at NIMH
- Expanded behavioral science programs at NIAAA, NICHD and NIA
- Training of behavioral science researchers, including young investigators, cross- disciplinary training, and increasing National Research Service Awards for behavioral and social scientists.
- Violence research at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

NO LONGER IMMUNE

Looking ahead to the FY 2002 budget, the big question is, what will the new Administration and Congress mean for federal science? No dramatic differences are expected, particularly since science has consistent bipartisan support in Congress, and as a candidate, George W. Bush expressed support for the doubling of NIH research and for science in general. "On the other hand," says APS Executive Director Alan Kraut, "the first post-election move in Congress was aimed at reducing federal spending, and NIH is big enough now so as not to be immune from funding struggles that characterize other giant public health and social programs."

"For us, as always," Kraut adds, "the basic goal will be to advocate for budget increases at NSF and NIH and to make sure that psychological science shares equitably in those increases."