CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House and Senate met today in pro forma session. Both chambers will be out of session next week for the Presidents Day recess and will reconvene the week of February 25.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

SENATE COMMITTEE APPROVES SIMON STUDY ABROAD FOUNDATION BILL  NEW

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 13 unanimously approved the Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act (S. 991). The measure would create an independent public-private foundation that would award competitive grants to institutions and individual students with the goal of significantly increasing the number of U.S. students studying abroad. The House approved a companion measure (H.R. 1469) last June.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

NATIONAL SCIENCE BOARD RELEASES REPORT ON COST SHARING

A committee of the National Science Board (NSB) on February 8 released a report on cost sharing policies of the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The “Report to Congress on Cost Sharing Policies at the National Science Foundation” makes several important recommendations. It says that NSF should:
• define and communicate a set of overarching principles to guide the application of mandatory cost sharing, to include specific goals and expected outcomes of its application;
• continue to employ OMB Circular A-110 to define cost sharing;
• enhance its training of program officers to avoid unintended implicit or explicit requests for voluntary cost sharing/institutional commitments during the budget negotiation process;
• reinstate mandatory cost sharing for programs for which cost sharing is foundational to strategic programmatic goals. **Mandatory cost sharing will be required for the following programs:** Engineering Research Centers, the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, and Industry/University Cooperative Research Centers.
• continue to communicate the requirements of tracking and reporting mandatory cost sharing to all institutions to which it provides funding; and
• periodically review its cost sharing policies and their impacts.

The report, which is the first of two, was required by the America COMPETES Act, which directed the NSB to report back to Congress on the “unintended consequences” of the agency’s decision in 2004 to eliminate mandatory cost sharing for all NSF programs. A statement accompanying the report says that the NSB’s cost sharing task force is “continuing its examination of key issues and challenges in cost sharing in order to use those findings to formulate a comprehensive set of recommendations on NSF cost sharing policy.” As it did with the first report, the panel will hold roundtable discussions with stakeholders in academia, government, and industry.

AAU and the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR) will analyze recommendations in the report and discuss them with officials at NSF, AAU senior research officers, members of the CFR, and others in the academic research community.

**NSF REPORT SHOWS FEDERAL R&D FUNDING DOWN IN FY07  NEW**

A new report from the National Science Foundation (NSF) estimates that federal obligations for research and development (R&D) in FY07 dropped by about $500 million from their FY06 levels to $116.4 billion. This constitutes a three-percent cut if adjusted for inflation. The FY07 total also marks the first decline in federal R&D spending—in both actual and inflation-adjusted dollars—since 2000.

Within the overall total, research (basic and applied) dropped by 2.2 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars, and development dropped by 3.5 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars.

The report contains additional information by type of work, funding per year—delineated by both “current” dollars and “constant” dollars—and by funding agency.

**OTHER**

**UNIVERSITY AND INDUSTRY LEADERS URGE SUPPLEMENTAL FY08 FUNDING FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**
A group of university and industry leaders came to Washington, D.C. on February 12 to urge Members of Congress and the Administration to include in an FY08 supplemental appropriations bill an additional $500 million for the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science and the National Science Foundation (NSF). The additional funding—$300 million for the DOE Office of Science and $200 million for NSF—is needed to avert likely layoffs of scientific and technical personnel and to prevent the loss of research capacity and facilities.

The group, which was organized by AAU and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, also held a press conference to discuss its request.

Those participating in the “fly-in” were university presidents Richard Brodhead of Duke University (NC); Robert H. Bruininks of University of Minnesota; Carol Garrison of the University of Alabama, Birmingham; Michael V. Martin of New Mexico State University; Graham Spanier of The Pennsylvania State University; Robert J. Zimmer of the University of Chicago, and C.D. “Dan” Mote of the University of Maryland system. The industry representatives were Norman Augustine, retired CEO and chairman of Lockheed Martin Corporation and lead author of the groundbreaking report, "Rising Above the Gathering Storm," and Christopher Hansen, president and CEO of AeA (American Electronics Association).

Last year, both the President and large majorities in Congress supported significant FY08 funding increases for the DOE Office of Science and NSF, as well as for the National Institute of Standards and Technology, as laid out in their respective competitiveness and innovation agendas and authorized by enactment of the America COMPETES Act. The goal, as stated in the 2005 National Academies report, “Rising Above the Gathering Storm,” has been to double funding for these agencies in order to bolster the nation’s international competitiveness.

However, when Congress and the Administration enacted the FY08 omnibus appropriations bill in December, nearly all of the additional funding was eliminated and some programs sustained real cuts.

As characterized by Norman Augustine, “While scientists and engineers represent only four percent of the U.S. workforce, their productivity creates jobs for 96 percent of the population. We are going to increasingly see the need for stimulus packages if we don't invest in basic science. We're not rising above the gathering storm.”

The university-business group met with Secretary of Energy Sam Bodman, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chair Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), House Science Committee Chair Bart Gordon (D-TN), Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Rep. Judy Biggert (R-IL).

End of document