FEDERAL FUNDING FOR SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING AT UNIVERSITIES DOWN 6 PERCENT

Latest figures show obligations down for R&D and facilities that support science and engineering

Of the six federal agencies that provide science and engineering funds, only one showed an increase.

Credit and Larger Version

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Federal agencies obligated $29 billion to 995 science and engineering academic institutions in fiscal year 2013, according to a new report from the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES). The figure represents a 6 percent decline in current dollars from the previous year, when agencies provided $31 billion to 1,073 institutions.

After adjustment for inflation, federal science and engineering obligations to academic institutions dropped by $1 billion from FY 2011 to FY 2012, and by $2 billion between FY 2012 and FY 2013. The obligations fall into six categories:

- Research and development;
- R&D plant (facilities and fixed equipment, such as reactors, wind tunnels and particle accelerators);
- Facilities and equipment for instruction in science and engineering;
- Fellowships, traineeships and training grants;
- General support for science and engineering;
- Other science and engineering activities.

Of those categories, research and development accounted for 89 percent of total federal obligations
The three largest providers of federal funding in fiscal 2013 were the Department of Health and Human Services (58 percent), NSF (17 percent) and the Department of Defense (12 percent). The Department of Energy, the Department of Agriculture and NASA provided the remainder of funding (11 percent, combined). Of these six agencies, only the Department of Energy showed increased obligations between FY 2012 and FY 2013.

The leading 20 universities, ranked in terms of federal academic S&E obligations, accounted for 37 percent of the FY 2013 federal total. The Johns Hopkins University continued to receive the most federal obligations of any university, at $1.5 billion.

NCSES collects information about federal obligations to independent nonprofit institutions in two categories: research and development, and R&D plant. The $6.6 billion provided to 1,068 institutions in FY 2013 represented a 2 percent decrease from $6.8 billion the previous year. The leading 10 nonprofits accounted for 36 percent of fiscal 2013 funding, with the MITRE Corporation receiving the largest total, at $485 million.

The statistics are from the NCSES Survey of Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges and Nonprofit Institutions.

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The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent federal agency that supports fundamental research and education across all fields of science and engineering. In fiscal year (FY) 2015, its budget is $7.3 billion. NSF funds reach all 50 states through grants to nearly 2,000 colleges, universities and other institutions. Each year, NSF receives about 48,000 competitive proposals for funding, and makes about 11,000 new funding awards. NSF also awards about $626 million in professional and service contracts yearly.

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