



Update on PSM Legislation July 1, 2008



AMERICA COMPETES ACT AUTHORIZED PSM PROGRAM AT NSF

In August, 2007, the President signed H.R. 2272, the America COMPETES Act, into law. The bill contained authorization for a pilot Professional Science Master's (PSM) program at the National Science Foundation (NSF). The authorization included the following provisions:

- A PSM clearinghouse at NSF to share program elements used in successful professional science master's degree programs.
- A grant program at NSF to make awards to institutions of higher education to facilitate the creation or improvement of PSM programs. Up to 200 grants will be made, each for one 3-year term which may be renewed for 2 additional years. Preference in the award of grants shall be given to institutions:
 - located in states with low percentages of citizens with graduate or professional degrees as determined by the Bureau of the Census
 - that demonstrate success in meeting the unique needs of the corporate, non-profit and government communities in the state
 - that secure more than 2/3 of the funding for PSM programs from sources other than the federal government.
- Evaluations will be done regularly and shall include recommendations for administrative and legislative action that could optimize the effectiveness of the program.
- Authorized: Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 - \$10 million; FY 09 - \$12 million; FY 10 - \$15 million

Funds were not **appropriated** for the establishment of the PSM pilot program at NSF for FY 08.

BUDGET FOR FY 09

The Administration's Budget Request for FY 09 calls for an increase at NSF of 13.6% above the 2008 enacted level. The proposed \$6.85 billion budget includes a 16% increase for Research and Related Activities and an 8.9% increase for Education and Human Resources. In Congressional hearings concerning the FY 09 NSF budget, Director Arden Bement has stressed that no new programs authorized in the America COMPETES Act have funding allocated to them in the Budget, but he has said he hopes to have enough budget flexibility to begin to fund some of the programs later in the year.

APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY 09

Both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have approved versions of the Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill for FY 09. As of now, there is no specific mention of the PSM in the Senate bill. However, NSF funding would increase to \$6.9 billion, including \$790 million for education and training programs. The Committee report calls for NSF to use its position to support students working towards *undergraduate* STEM degrees. In the House bill, funding for NSF would be \$6.9 billion. In that bill the Education and Human Resources directorate would receive a large increase, nearly 16%, to \$840 million (from the current \$725 million). However, \$50 million of that increase, is reportedly a result of shifting funds from "research and related activities" rather than additional money. In the meantime, CGS continues to work with relevant House and Senate Committee staff to include the NSF PSM program, as authorized in the America COMPETES Act, in appropriations legislation.

There is doubt that the regular appropriations process will be completed before a new Administration takes office in January 2009. In that case, a "Continuing Resolution" will be likely and most programs would remain at FY 08 levels—in the case of the PSM, that would mean no funding until sometime in 2009.