

OPENING STATEMENT
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of the Subcommittee on Research and Technology

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
“National Science Foundation Part I: Overview and Oversight”
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Thank you Madam Chairwoman and welcome to our distinguished panel. I’m glad we are having this hearing to get an update on the important work being done at the National Science Foundation. I want to thank Director Cordova for her leadership at the foundation. A few weeks ago we had a number of NSF grant recipients here and we had a chance to hear about and see some of their breakthrough research and innovations. This was only a small sample but a great demonstration of the excellent work facilitated by funding from the NSF.

The federal government is uniquely positioned to fund world-class research, especially high risk, high reward research that leads to the transformative discoveries and innovations that drive our economy forward. In doing so, the National Science Foundation plays a vital role, not only in advancing the U.S. scientific enterprise, but also in shoring up our nation’s ability to compete in an increasingly technology-driven and dynamic global economy.

Funding for the NSF has not been what I would have liked to have seen in recent years; I think many of my colleagues agree. This committee needs to push to make NSF funding a priority in this Congress as we face possible significant budget cuts. While we do this, we also need to make sure that NSF does the most possible with limited resources; we will get into some of that today in this hearing.

I believe that it is also important that Congress does not make the mistake of changing the funding priorities of the scientists at the NSF. The social sciences, in particular, make key contributions to critical national and global challenges. Social scientists are showing us the human factors involved in developing effective cybersecurity. This committee is working on strengthening cybersecurity in the federal government and we need the input of social scientists to do this. Additionally, NSF-funded social science research into cross-cultural, non-verbal communication, which was presented to this committee in 2011, helped the army improve the way it trains its soldiers and lessened conflicts with foreign citizens. These are just a few examples of the value of social science research which is only a small but very important portion of the NSF budget.

Regardless of the field of research, the work at the NSF does not stop at the laboratory bench. Programs like the NSF Innovation Corps, or I-Corps, and the SBIR/STTR program, aim to help scientists bring NSF-funded research to market. I-Corps provides researchers with the education, mentoring, and networking necessary to begin the process of commercializing their research, and SBIR/STTR provides funding to help small businesses transition NSF innovations to commercial products. I was proud to help lead the effort to authorize the I-Corps program in the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act, which passed last Congress and was signed into law in January. I also supported SBIR reauthorization, which included annual increases in funding levels.

As we review the important work going on at the NSF, I would like to hear about NSF's plans for participation in the Interagency Working Group on Research Regulation established in the AICA legislation. It doesn't make sense for our eminent scientists to be spending 42 percent of their time complying with federal research regulations. I have been a champion of this issue for years and was glad to see some of the language from a bill I introduced last Congress incorporated into the AICA.

I look forward to hearing about the progress NSF has made in implementing a number of provisions of the AICA that address management challenges that have been the topic of hearings before this committee. I am confident that the NSF will take the necessary steps to implement the policy changes in the law. This hearing is a good opportunity to check in and to see how things are going.

Finally, I was pleased to learn that the NSF has made significant progress in increasing accountability in its management of large research facilities, lowering the cost of Intergovernmental Personnel Act appointments for rotating staff, and preventing research misconduct. I am eager to learn more about how the agency is protecting our investment in research in these areas.

Thank you again to Dr. Córdova and Ms. Lerner for being here. I look forward to your testimony. I yield back.