



Issue #09-03

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE – March 13, 2009

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FEDERAL UPDATE: DISTRIBUTION OF AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009

White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB): After President Barack Obama signed the 2009 economic stimulus into law, the White House immediately published guidance to agencies and grant-seekers that outlines rules for the upcoming solicitation process. As expected, grants must be distributed on a competitive basis. In addition, although extensions or continuations of ongoing projects are permissible, OMB has encouraged federal agencies to consider new funding opportunities. Each federal agency receiving stimulus funding, including NIH, NSF and NIST, are expected to publish guidelines on how the agency will distribute the stimulus funds. (Source: AAU.)

Rice University's federal government relations firm, Crowell Moring, recently produced a detailed memorandum with information about funding opportunities from federal agencies under the stimulus bill. For a copy, please contact the Rice government relations office.

National Science Foundation (NSF): The NSF is being urged to distribute a vast majority of its \$2 billion in stimulus funds for multi-year research grants by Sept. 30, 2010. NSF is expected to fund projects that have already been reviewed and deemed grant-worthy but did not receive money due to previous budgetary restraints. At this time, there is no expectation for new solicitations by NSF for stimulus funds, nor is NSF expected to extend existing grants. NSF's official stimulus funds Web site is www.nsf.gov/recovery. (Source: AAU).

National Institutes of Health (NIH): The NIH received \$10.4 billion in federal stimulus funding – \$7.4 billion for research via NIH centers and institutes; \$800 million for research via the Office of the Director; and \$1 billion for construction-related projects. NIH is expected to review proposals from fiscal years 2008 and 2009 to find “meritorious” projects that were not previously funded. In contrast to NSF, NIH is expected to offer extensions to researchers who have made progress and require additional funding to continue, or expand, existing work. NIH's official stimulus funds Web site is: www.nih.gov/recovery. (Source: AAU.)

Fiscal Year 2009 Omnibus Appropriation Bill: The fiscal year 2009 omnibus appropriations bill, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama on March 11, includes \$381,000 for purchase of equipment for the Rice University BioScience Research Collaborative (BRC). Last October, Rice also received two directed appropriations via the Department of Defense spending bill: \$2.4 million for the arm chair quantum wire project at the Smalley Institute and \$2.4 million for the Consortium for Nanomaterials for Aerospace Commerce and Technology (CONTACT).

Highlights of funding for key science and research agencies under the omnibus bill include:

- NIH: \$30.3 billion (an increase of \$938 million, or 3.2 percent over fiscal year 2008).
- NSF: \$6.5 billion (an increase of \$425 million, or 7 percent, over fiscal year 2008).

- Department of Energy Office of Science: \$4.77 billion (an increase of \$755 million, or 18 percent, over fiscal year 2008). (Source: *Crowell Moring and AAU*.)

President Obama's Fiscal Year 2010 Budget: President Barack Obama released an outline for his fiscal year 2010 budget on Feb. 26. While not specific on details, Obama said science and research are among his top priorities and proposed specific initiatives, including:

- NIH: \$6 billion to support cancer research.
- NSF: \$7 billion with an emphasis on researchers at the beginning of their careers and high-risk projects. (Source: *AAU*.)

Obama Overturns Stem-Cell Ban: President Barack Obama signed an executive order on March 10 that allows the federal government to provide funding to scientists for research using human stem-cells beyond currently approved lines. NIH is expected to draft a set of ethical guidelines in the coming weeks restricting certain types of stem cell research. (Source: *The Chronicle for Higher Education*.)

Obama Picks Koizumi for Science Post: President Obama has appointed Kei Koizumi as the assistant director of federal research and development in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Previously, Koizumi was the director of the Research and Development Policy Program for American Association for the Advancement of Science. (Source: *The National Journal*.)

STATE UPDATE: 2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Record Number of Bills Filed. According to the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas (ICUT), the 81st legislative session has seen an explosion of bill filings. As the March 15 filing deadline approached, there have been 4,071 bills filed in the House and 2,075 filed in the Senate for a total of 6,146. This is a 20 percent increase over 2007.

Appropriating Subcommittees Work on State Budget: With the release of committee assignments by the new Speaker of the House, Joe Straus, R-San Antonio, the Texas Legislature has been busy conducting hearings and soliciting testimony about the upcoming budget cycle. There has been significant discussion of items to be included in an emergency supplemental appropriations bill (HB 6) dealing with damages caused by Hurricane Ike to state agencies and institutions of higher education.

ICUT Officers Have Lunch With Higher Education Chairman. State Rep. Dan Branch, R-Highland Park, hosted the ICUT board officers at a private breakfast meeting to discuss issues important to private colleges and universities. Joining Branch for the breakfast were: Presidents Tim Summerlin, Schreiner University; George Martin, St. Edward's University; Charles Cotrell, St. Mary's University; Tom Cedel, Concordia University; and Carol McDonald, ICUT executive director. It was the first time in several decades a sitting chair of the Higher Education Committee extended such an invitation.

Priority Bills for Rice University, 81st Legislative Session:

- SB 895 by state Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Flower Mound: Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas. Referred to Senate Health and Human Services Committee.
- SB 45 by state Sen. Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo: interinstitutional tuition exemptions. Filed. No action.
- HB 1864 by state Rep. Scott Hochberg, D-Houston: inter-institutional exemptions. Referred to Higher Education Committee.
- HB 58 by state Rep. Dan Branch, R-Dallas: inter-institutional tuition exemptions. Referred to Higher Education Committee.

- SB 44 by Zaffirini: undergraduate participation in Advanced Research Project. Voted out of Senate Higher Education Committee. To be heard on Senate floor at later date.
- HB 1893 by state Rep. Joe Driver, R-Garland: concealed guns on campus. Referred to Public Safety Committee.
- SB 1164 by state Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio: concealed handguns on campus. Filed. No action.