

Dear Colleague:

The National Science Board draft discussion paper, "The Scientific Allocation of Scientific Resources," is being released for comment. This paper was prepared for the National Science Board by its Committee on Strategic Science and Engineering Policy Issues. It contains the preliminary recommendations from the committee's study on how priorities might best be set across fields and disciplines in the Federal budget for research.

Our study has addressed priority setting practices for publicly funded research, both in the U.S. and in other countries. We have commissioned two literature reviews, one by the RAND Science and Technology Policy Institute on the Federal system for funding research, existing tools to support research budget allocation decisions, and current mechanisms for input on those decisions. The second study, by SRI International, examined the literature on international models of S&T budget coordination and priority setting, focusing on eight governments, with presentations by top-ranking science officials for each in a public Symposium in November 1999. We also heard presentations from experts on specific methodologies proposed or in use to assist priority setting in research budgets.

The committee has met with representatives of OSTP, OMB, the National Academies, Congressional staff, and Federal departments and agencies who expressed considerable interest in improving the process by which funding decisions are made for federally supported research. We have arrived at some preliminary conclusions from these sources. Our draft recommendations focus on several areas for improved data, evaluation, and expert advice to achieve more effective priority setting for Federal S&T investments, including:

- Enhancements to the existing S&T policy apparatus in the White House to provide a continuing Federal capability for expert review, evaluation, and advice, representing a broad cross-section of the science and engineering research and education community, to inform decisions on research budget allocations;
- Better quantitative data and methods of analysis for evaluation of the effectiveness of Federal research support in achieving goals for research;
- A mechanism to identify and track the relevant Federal funds for S&T through the budget process in the Administration and Congress to support a coordinated Federal budget for research across agencies and departments.

We invite you as stakeholders in federally funded research to offer your comments on our preliminary findings and recommendations. You may submit your comments to the NSB Office by email to [NSBOffice@nsf.gov](mailto:NSBOffice@nsf.gov), by mail to Jean Pomeroy, Room 1220, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22230; or by fax: 703-292-9008.

Sincerely,

Eamon M. Kelly, Chairman  
National Science Board and  
Committee on Strategic Science and  
Engineering Policy Issues