

Dr. Arden L. Bement, Jr.
Director, National Science Foundation

Welcome Remarks
EPSCoR PD/PA Meeting
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Good morning.

I am pleased to congratulate you this morning on the progress you are making in boosting your state R&D enterprises. I don't get to meet with you often, but I assure you that I follow your activities closely.

In the research and education community, the EPSCoR concept and acronym are well-known and well-respected. Those of you who are assembled here are taking a greater step--making sure that the EPSCoR goal of broader participation becomes part of the parlance and practice of the entire nation.

From shore to shore, I see EPSCoR jurisdictions moving forward with cutting-edge research and education projects.

I wish I could report that we have made as much progress in Washington in increasing science and technology investments.

As director of the National Science Foundation, I am often asked: "What keeps you awake at night?" My answer is: "The economic future of the nation and its continued ability to compete in world markets."

In Washington, we are acutely aware of the need to invest heavily in research, education, and the development of a highly skilled science and technology workforce--at the national, state, and local levels.

Members of Congress have been outspoken on the need for regional science and engineering capacity to help the nation thrive in the increasingly competitive global economy

The successful passage of the America COMPETES Act attests to that support.

This much-needed legislation expands NSF's research and education programs and pays special attention to the preparation and training of science and technology students and teachers.

As often happens in politics, however, the short term squeezes out the long term. Balancing the good news is the fact that the doubling of the NSF budget continues to be a long-awaited prospect, stretched out over many years.

The FY 2008 appropriation for NSF provided a welcome respite from the fiscal environment of the previous year. NSF's EPSCoR program fared well. The appropriation included \$115 million

for EPSCoR--\$8 million above NSF's request. In June, a separate Supplemental added \$5 million more to EPSCoR.

Consistent funding is essential if we are to carry out our goals, including our pledge to raise the upper limits on NSF Research Infrastructure and Improvement grants. This was one of the recommendations of the EPSCoR 2020 workshop.

If we continue to garner high-level support for EPSCoR, we will be able to move forward through Track II grants with another initiative--integrating the need for IT resources into EPSCoR planning.

Cyberinfrastructure has become increasingly important as a complement to physical infrastructure. This is especially true for research institutions developing their research capacity. This is reflected in the language of several sections that apply to NSF in the America COMPETES Act.

For FY2009, the President requested a 13 percent increase for NSF overall, and another conservative increase for NSF EPSCoR. The House Science Committee supports the request. However, there is a very high likelihood that the federal government will operate under a continuing resolution--which usually means a tight lid on increases and no new starts.

At NSF we have found that our best bet for achieving our goals in a constrained economy is to form partnerships across all sectors of the economy and society, in order to maximize the gains from our respective efforts.

EPSCoR is the touchstone model for pairing federal resources with state, private sector, and institutional assets.

EPSCoR's goals are closely aligned with the recommendations of the many reports flowing out of Washington in recent years on what's needed to support innovation and boost prosperity nationwide.

Since it was authorized by Congress in 1978, EPSCoR has grown from a fledgling effort to boost research capacity in five states to a broad mandate for ensuring that every state and territory has the opportunity to develop its science and engineering base and contribute to national competitiveness.

To put it succinctly, NSF is dedicated to developing science and engineering talent wherever it is. EPSCoR is based on the premise that no one region and no one group of institutions has a corner on the market of good ideas, smart people, or outstanding researchers.

Clearly, EPSCoR has been instrumental in building capacity and broadening the participation of underserved regions in the country.

One of the key successes, in my view, is EPSCoR's emphasis on partnerships with states to develop the systems and infrastructure needed to move ideas from discovery to laboratory to the marketplace.

This approach takes advantage of the critical thinking and strategic planning available at the state level. That's why NSF requires the integration of EPSCoR project plans with state science and technology plans.

Industry partnerships play an equally important role in developing the commercial potential of research findings, as well as preparing the future workforce.

These partnerships are win-win situations for both the participating companies and the population. They build regional capacity and infrastructure. They supply the companies with a workforce skilled in emerging and fast-growing fields. And the students who participated in research alongside industry mentors have a head start in getting the most sought-after jobs.

Through a willingness to work together and share our enthusiasm as well as ideas, we will continue to move forward, despite the bumps in the road.

I want to thank all of you for your continued dedication to the national EPSCoR goals. You, your institutions, and the National Science Foundation are part of a successful partnership that will continue far into the future.

I'll be happy to take some of your questions now, and invite you to discuss your thoughts with Dr. Olsen and me tonight, at a special reception at NSF headquarters.