

**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314**

March 23, 2020

Important Notice No. 146

Important Notice to the Science and Engineering Community

SUBJECT: NSF Letter to Community Regarding COVID-19

NSF was established in the aftermath of a defining chapter of the 20th century. World War II tested the nation, and the research community rose to that challenge with tremendous leaps forward in science, engineering, and technology. After the war, Congress and the President made a pivotal decision to retain support for research and development as a national priority. The spirit that drove accomplishments in wartime laboratories and military facilities would be harnessed not only for the advancement of knowledge, but also for the progress of society and the benefit of the nation.

Today, we are facing a time of new uncertainty and upheaval as the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) tests our communities and workplaces. Our thoughts are with the healthcare workers and volunteers around the world who are working tirelessly to care for the sick and protect public health. Our thoughts are with teachers struggling to teach in new environments in new ways, and with students who want to continue learning. Our thoughts are with parents trying to explain to their children why everything will be different for a while and why home is the safest place they can be. We are encouraged by the many stories of people finding new ways to care for their families, continue their work, and support their communities. The research community is facing unique challenges during this crisis, from the unprecedented disruptions to education and academic and research programs, to how to best support public health efforts through our knowledge and expertise.

NSF understands the effects this challenge will have on NSF-funded research and facilities, and we are committed to providing the greatest available flexibilities to support your health and safety as well as your work. NSF is continually updating guidance and our online resources to keep you informed. Today, we are also issuing new guidance for NSF awardees to implement flexibilities authorized by the Office of Management and Budget. We hope that this guidance will answer many of the questions you are facing as you cope with this trying time. NSF is also accepting proposals for non-medical, non-clinical-care RAPID research on coronavirus - our ability to better understand the virus and how to effectively respond will be crucial to public health efforts. The latest information is available on our website at: <https://www.nsf.gov/coronavirus>.

The post-war decision to make basic research a national priority matters to us in this moment. There is NSF-supported research—spanning the seven decades of NSF’s history—behind nearly every aspect of the work being done right now to combat this pandemic. Our understanding of fundamental physics and chemistry is at the heart of many diagnostic techniques, including MRI and other imaging methods. Precision nanoscale engineering enables cutting edge medical devices. Biology, data, computation, and mathematics help epidemiologists model and accurately track the spread of infections. Computing and

communication innovations are helping us telework and remain connected with our families and friends while practicing social distancing. Social and economic sciences help us better design and deploy healthcare solutions. There are many, many more examples from every field of research. And, of course, there are educators who have fostered not just new generations of researchers and innovators, but also the medical professionals on the front lines of this effort. I know you take pride in the research community's legacy, and I hope you'll take comfort knowing that your work is important in this difficult moment.

Your work is also crucial to our future success. When this pandemic passes, basic research will still be an engine of our economy, it will still underpin our national defense, and it will still be the main driver of innovations and technology that enhances every aspect of our lives. Envisioning the amazing possibilities that science and technology hold for our future is central to what we do. We can point to examples in every scientific discipline of the continual flow of pioneering discoveries and ingenious insights you have fostered. That progress is built on optimism and hope for a bright future.

During my time as director of NSF, I have been thrilled to watch researchers overcome tough challenges through creativity and diligence. I know that the dedication and inventiveness you bring to the scientific enterprise will enable us to navigate these hardships. Science will always be the bedrock of progress and the scientific community will continue to rise to meet the challenges that face us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "France Córdova". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "F" and a long, sweeping underline.

France Córdova
Director