

# NSF



## **Statutory Mission:**

To promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense.

**Vision:** Enabling the Nation's future through discovery, learning, and innovation. Realizing the promise of the 21st century depends in large measure on today's investments in science, engineering, and mathematics research and education. NSF's investment—in people, in their ideas, and in the tools they use—will catalyze the strong progress in science and engineering needed to secure the Nation's future.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

February 2002

“Science and engineering are at the heart of the 21st century. New knowledge is a powerful driver of economic prosperity and a force for human progress. That makes new knowledge the most sought after prize in the world.”

Rita R. Colwell

It is my pleasure to introduce the National Science Foundation's *FY 2001 Management and Performance Highlights*, the first of what we expect to be an annual report. This overview is intended to capture our core business priorities and accomplishments of the past year. I am particularly proud that this year we have been singled out by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget as “a true center of excellence...for reaching for real results and measuring and attaining those results....” It is a challenge to sustain that praise, one we take seriously and proudly.

Every year, for more than half a century, the Foundation's far-sighted investments continue to enrich Americans' health, security, environment, economy, and general quality of life. And every year, the Foundation's optimal use of limited public funds relies on two conditions: ensuring that NSF's investments are aimed—and continuously re-aimed—at the frontiers of understanding; and that they go to competitive, merit-reviewed, and time-limited awards with clear criteria for success. When these two conditions are met, our Nation gets the most intellectual and economic leverage from its investments in research and education.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, the stakes for our investments could not be higher. The future of America—indeed the future of the world—is more dependent upon advances in science and technology than ever before. An inspired scientific community is focused on ensuring not just our security, but also our very quality of life. We well remember that our national






security includes the condition of our spirit as much as the size of our arsenal, and we are heartened by the echo of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's words in his secret letter to Robert Oppenheimer in 1943: "Whatever the enemy may be planning, American science will be equal to the challenge."

We have always reached our distant horizons, and set out for new ones in our restless quest for knowledge. The Foundation's investments are essential to our national strategy for attaining our overarching national goals. It is impossible to predict which areas of science and engineering will yield groundbreaking discoveries, what those discoveries will be, or how they will impact other disciplines and, eventually, our daily lives.

Who can be sure what will be needed to maintain our national security and our strong economy, to clean up the environment, and to develop a healthier and better-educated citizenry? What the National Science Foundation can ensure is that the United States remains at the forefront of scientific capability by sustaining our investments in basic research and education, thereby enhancing our ability to shape a more prosperous and secure future for ourselves, our children, and future generations.

  
Rita R. Colwell  
Director

For a more detailed discussion of NSF's FY 2001 management and performance accomplishments, see our *FY 2001 Accountability Report* at [www.nsf.gov/bfa](http://www.nsf.gov/bfa) and our *FY 2001 GPRA Performance Report* at [www.nsf.gov/od/gpra](http://www.nsf.gov/od/gpra).