

The Myth of Stabilization

In February 1980, Donald Fredrickson, the then NIH Director, testifying before the Appropriations Subcommittee, expressed the Administration's desire to fund at least 5,000 research grants in fiscal year (FY) 1981 in order to stabilize the science base. This stabilization strategy was designed to reduce the fluctuations that occurred in the numbers of new and competing research grants that could be funded each year. This policy was to apply not only to individual investigator-initiated research projects but also to other support mechanisms. As stated in the 1981 House Appropriations Committee report language, "The effectiveness of the overall NIH programs will be promoted if there is stability of funds available for other research activities as well as research project grants."

Unfortunately, as is painfully evident to all, NIH's stabilization policy has been accomplished at the expense of other support mechanisms, such as research centers, research resources, contracts, and training. In essence, the stabilization policy has resulted in a loss of flexibility and a loss of NIH's ability to allocate resources among the many competing program demands.

As we are all aware, the past several years have seen the stabilization floor become, instead, a ceiling. That is, until the FY 1985 appropriation provided for over 6,500 awards, which brought relief and excitement to the research community. The excitement, however, was short-lived thanks to David Stockman and OMB's action. As a result of the timing of the cutback to 5,000 awards, NIH has been forced to fund at the stifling rate of approximately 4,000 new and competing research grants for the last two council rounds.

While the question still remains whether NIH will fund 5,000, 6,000, or 6,500 research grants in FY 1985, it is important to note that, whatever the number, the traditional research community will be shortchanged. The poorly publicized reason is that Public Law 97-219, an amendment to the Small Business Act, requires the PHS agencies, as well as others, to set aside a specified amount of their research and development budgets for the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. The awards made under this program are included as part of the new and competing investigator-initiated research project grant total. These awards represent an increased percentage of NIH's research and development budget, rising from 0.2% in FY 1983 to 1.25% in FY 1986 and 1987. Since for-profit organizations can already compete for traditional project grants, the setting aside of funds for the SBIR program effectively limits NIH's flexibility and reduces the amount of money available to the investigative community based in universities and research institutes.

As indicated below, these awards represent an increasing percentage of the total, a total that both Congress and the White House quote as a reflection of their generosity.

Grants	FY	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Total Research*		4,785	5,109	5,027	5,389	5,497	6,000±
SBIR†		—	—	—	123	246	375§

*Represents grants coded R01, R22, R23, R43, R44, P01, and U01. †Represents grants coded R43, R44. ‡Probable total. §Approximate.

Martin Frank
Executive Secretary-Treasurer

Gathering of APS Past Presidents



Eighteen past, present, and future presidents of APS attended a reception in honor of retiring Executive Secretary-Treasurer Orr E. Reynolds held on Tuesday evening, April 23, 1985, during the Federation meeting in Anaheim, CA. The above photograph was taken to commemorate this special occasion. The year in parentheses is the year in which the president's term began.

First row, left to right: David F. Bohr (1978), Earl H. Wood (1980), A. Clifford Barger (1970), Hermann Rahn (1963), David Bruce Dill (1950), Robert E. Forster (1966), Orr E. Reynolds, Robert M. Berne (1972), Ewald E. Selkurt (1976).

Second row, left to right: Franklyn Knox (President-Elect), Harvey Sparks (member of Council), Francis J. Haddy (1981), Arthur C.

Guyton (1974), Alfred P. Fishman (1983), Howard Morgan (current President), John B. West (Past-President), Ernst Knobil (1979), Walter C. Randall (1982), William F. Ganong (1977).

Daniel C. Tosteson (1973) was also present at the reception. Other past presidents—Eugene M. Landis (1952), Edward F. Adolph (1953), Horace W. Davenport (1961), Hymen S. Mayerson (1962), John R. Pappenheimer (1964), John M. Brookhart (1965), Robert W. Berliner (1967), C. Ladd Prosser (1970), John R. Brobeck (1971), and Bodil Schmidt-Nielsen (1975)—while unable to attend, were present in spirit, having contributed autographed photographs and letters to the album presented at the reception to Dr. Reynolds.