# Major NSF Reorganization Announced by Stever

National Science Foundation (NSF) director H. Guyford Stever on 10 July announced a reorganization of the foundation which he said is designed to realign NSF management to handle growth and changes in programs which have occurred in recent years.

The reorganization plan generally involves a regrouping of NSF activities along functional or disciplinary lines. One practical effect of the plan for NSF clients is likely to be that an applicant for research support will have one place to apply to in NSF, rather than several places as was often true in the past. NSF officials say that integration of basic research activities in particular disciplines was an aim of the reorganization and that the agency wants to promote better coordination and maintain the same standards of selection for projects throughout the foundation.

Stever and other NSF officials explicitly denied that the reorganization was a response to recent congressional criticism of NSF. He insisted that the administrative restructuring had been under consideration for more than a year and said that the plan would have been announced earlier if questions about science advisory arrangements in the White House had been resolved sooner.

Stever has been wearing two hats as President's science adviser and as NSF director since President Nixon abolished the science adviser's slot on the White House staff after the 1972 election. President Ford has declared his intention to reestablish a science advisory office in the White House (*Science*, 4 July). This will require action by Congress, which is likely to come fairly promptly.

Stever said that the timing of the announcement of the reorganization was influenced by a wish to inform Congress of the plan in advance of oversight hearings on NSF operations to be held by the House Science and Technology Committee's subcommittee on science, research, and development beginning on 22 July.

Under the reorganization plan, the number of NSF assistant directors is being increased from five to seven. The directorate which now oversees the major part of basic research projects will be split into three separate directorates—for mathematical, physical, and engineering sciences; astronomical, earth, and ocean sciences; and biological and social sciences. The other three operational directorates will be science education; research applications; and scientific, technological, and international affairs. The seventh directorate will handle agency administration.

The organization chart, made available at the 10 July press briefing on the reorganization, was labeled "interim organization structure." Stever explained that the assignments and program realignments depicted were definite as far as the assistant director level goes, but that in coming months there are likely to be changes affecting subunits. The new organization plan reflects an effort to come to terms with both a growth in budget and a broadening of responsibilities which NSF has experienced in recent years. The last major NSF reorganization occurred in 1970, when major structural alterations were made to accommodate NSF's move into serious support of applied research which had been mandated by congressional action in 1968 (*Science*, 3 April 1970).

Since then, support of basic research has more than doubled (from $162 million in fiscal year 1970 to $341 million in 1975). In part this has occurred because of a trend away from the support of basic research by mission-oriented agencies encouraged by the so-called Mansfield amendment, which required that basic research funded by the military have a direct relevance to the Pentagon's mission. Some programs dropped by the military were transferred to NSF.

During the past 5 years, NSF responsibilities for overseeing international programs were widened considerably by an increase in the number of bilateral programs of scientific cooperation, notably by the activities generated by détente with the Soviet Union. In addition, the grafting of science advisory functions onto NSF after 1972 required the creation of two new science policy units within the foundation. The heads of these units have been reporting directly to Stever's office, but under the reorganization plan, the Science and Technology Policy Office, the Office of Energy R & D Policy, and the Office of National R & D Assessment have been moved into the directorate of scientific, technological, and international affairs. This is expected to lessen the burden on the director caused by the ad hoc arrangements imposed by the adding of the science advisory job to Stever's portfolio.

The White House science advisory job cannot be filled until the office is officially established, and Stever was asked at the press briefing whether he was a candidate for the job. While not replying directly, he said that the dual responsibility had been taxing and that he was looking forward to concentrating on the director's job.

Until the new White House science office is set up, many questions about how the new NSF directorate will operate cannot be answered, but it is likely that the science policy offices in NSF will proceed very much as they have in working with the Domestic Council and the Office of Management and Budget in the Executive Office. The assistant directorship for scientific, technological, and international affairs is not yet filled. One other assistant directorship is open—that with responsibility for biological and social sciences. NSF deputy director Richard C. Atkinson will head the directorate until an assistant director is selected.

The remaining assistant directorships will be filled by officials already serving at that level. The assistant director for mathematical, physical, and engineering sciences is Edward C. Creutz. Assistant director for astronomical, earth, and ocean sciences is Robert E. Hughes. Hughes will also serve as interim head of the directorate for scientific, technological, and international affairs. Lowell J. Paige will continue as assistant director for NSF's education activities with the name changed to the directorate of science education. Alfred J. Eggers continues as assistant director for research application. Eldon D. Taylor continues as assistant director for administration.

NSF is reorganizing under fire even if, as Stever insists, it is not reorganizing because it is being shot at. The reorganization itself is likely to have little effect one way or the other on congressional criticism, which has mainly questioned the value of some basic research projects, aspects of the science education program, and the peer review system. The reorganization is an apparently logical effort to rearrange the big boxes and little boxes on the NSF organization chart, but now NSF and the Congress will be turning their attention to closer examination of what goes on in the offices represented by the boxes.—JOHN WALSH