

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 7, 2008

To: Shelly Wilkie Martinez, Desk Officer
Office of Management and Budget

From: Lynda T. Carlson, Director
Science Resources Statistics Division

Via: Suzanne Plimpton, Clearance Officer
National Science Foundation (NSF)

Subject: Notification of data collection under generic clearance

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you of NSF's plan to conduct two brief respondent surveys under the generic clearance for survey improvement projects (OMB #3145-0174). This activity is associated with the redesign of the NSF Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges.

Background

The Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges has been conducted annually since 1973. The survey collects information on the amount of research and development (R&D) expenditures at colleges and universities in the United States. In the spring of 2007, NSF began a three-year effort to evaluate and redesign the survey. The goals of the redesign are to update the survey instrument to ensure we are obtaining the most valid and reliable measurements of the amount of academic research activity in science and engineering fields in the U.S, and to evaluate the need to expand the scope of data collected beyond that of R&D expenditures. We have already conducted a data user workshop, expert panel, and a series of institution visits in order to receive input on possible changes to the survey. We would now like to conduct a brief respondent survey to collect quantitative information on emerging and interdisciplinary research fields that should be added to our current survey taxonomy. The current survey is provided for reference in Appendix A. Specifically, we will ask a subset of respondents for a list of the fields currently associated with their institution's R&D expenditures that do not correspond with the NSF survey's fields of research. We will then ask the research administrators at an expanded sample of responding institutions to examine the compiled list and give their opinion on the most critical fields to be added.

This communication will be in the form of two email questionnaires. The first questionnaire will be sent to approximately 200 academic institutions across the country. The list of these 200 institutions was compiled using lists with a great deal of overlap. First, we included institutions ranking in the top 50 institution for R&D expenditures in each of the 9 broad science and engineering (S&E) fields and the 8 non-science and

engineering fields. Furthermore, we included any additional institutions from the top 50 institutions in 5 categories labeled, “other” within the broad S&E fields—Other engineering, Other environmental sciences, Other physical sciences, Other life sciences, and Other social sciences. The second questionnaire will be sent to about 315 institutions. In addition to the 200 institutions selected for the first questionnaire, we will include any additional institutions in the top 300 institutions in overall R&D expenditures in FY 2006. We will be sending questionnaires only to those who have completed the FY 2007 Academic R&D survey in order to avoid unduly burdening those who are still completing the primary survey. Currently the response rate for the FY 2007 is over 80% and is expected to be over 90% by the time of the first email survey, so very few institutions will need to be excluded.

The results will be used as the basis for revising the survey taxonomy of research fields.

Data Collection Instrument

A draft of the two email questionnaires are provided in Appendix B.

Data Collection Procedures

As soon as clearance is obtained, we will email the first questionnaire to the 200 survey respondents with a request for response within two weeks. Once we have received responses from 70-80% of the institutions, we will prepare the list of recommended field additions and send to the 315 institutions for voting. Data collection activities are expected to begin in late March 2008.

Burden Information

We expect an 80 percent response rate to both email questionnaires, which equals 412 responses. The FY 2006 Survey of R&D Expenditures at Universities and Colleges obtained an overall response rate of 97 percent. We expect each survey response to require 60 minutes. Therefore, we estimate a total of approximately 412 hours of respondent burden.

Incentive Payments

There are no incentive payments.

Contact Information

The contact person for questions regarding this data collection is:

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Attachments

cc: Fran Featherston