

Dire documentation: NIH funding facts

Only 20% of grants ultimately funded

The U.S. Senate committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions held a hearing on March 11, 2008, that discussed how consecutive years of flat funding of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have put a generation of science at risk.

According to testimony by **Drew Gilpin Faust**, Harvard University president, here are some of the ways the flat funding has damaged America's scientific environment:

- First-time recipients of NIH's premier research grant are older now than they were two decades ago. In 1990, the average age was 39 years old; now it's 43 years old.
- The success rate for one of these premier research grants is only 12% today upon a first submission; in 1999, the success rate was 29%.
- Even top scientists may have to submit a grant applications three times over a two-year period before they receiving grant funding that is substantially less than it was five years ago.
- When grants are rejected, research institutions downsize their labs, lay-off post-doctoral fellows, and the morale suffers, resulting in scientists shying away from the big research questions.
- In all, only 20% of grants will ultimately be funded.
- First-time investigators received 29% of premier NIH grants in 1990; today they receive 25% of those grants.