

NSF CREATION AND MISSION

The National Science Foundation is an independent agency of the U.S. Government, established by the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended, and related legislation, 42 U.S.C. 1861 et seq., and was given additional authority by the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act (42 U.S.C. 1885), and Title I of the Education for Economic Security Act (20 U.S.C. 3911 to 3922).

The NSF statutory mission was established by the Act of 1950:

TO PROMOTE THE PROGRESS OF SCIENCE; TO ADVANCE THE NATIONAL HEALTH, PROSPERITY, AND WELFARE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

The Act authorizes and directs NSF to initiate and support:

- *basic scientific research and research fundamental to the engineering process;*
- *programs to strengthen scientific and engineering research potential;*
- *science and engineering education programs at all levels and in all the various fields of science and engineering;*
- *programs that provide a source of information for policy formulation; and other activities to promote these ends.*

Over the years, NSF's statutory authority has been modified in a number of significant ways. In 1968, authority to support applied research was added to the Organic Act. In 1980, the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act gave NSF standing authority to support activities to improve the participation of women and minorities in science and engineering. Another major change occurred in 1986, when engineering was accorded equal status with science in the Organic Act.