

**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
Office of the Director
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230**

Notice No. 120

June 27, 1997

**IMPORTANT NOTICE TO
PRESIDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES
AND COLLEGES AND HEADS OF
OTHER NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS**

Subject: Year 2000 Computer Problem

As part of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) activities related to potential problems associated with Year 2000, NSF wishes to remind its awardees of their responsibilities under NSF grants and cooperative agreements.

Recipients of NSF grants and cooperative agreements generally have full responsibility for the scientific, administrative, and financial aspects of the activity being supported. This responsibility extends to anticipating and reacting to events such as the Year 2000 and taking all steps necessary to mitigate potential problems that might be caused by the Year 2000.

Many computer systems may experience operational difficulties because they are unable to handle the change from the year 1999 to the year 2000. Others may fail because they do not properly consider 2000 a leap year. For computer systems that use two digits to represent the year, calculations, comparisons, and data sorting may be adversely affected. This would include computer systems ranging from the desktop to the largest mainframe.

Awardees should also be aware that the Year 2000 may affect electronic devices utilizing embedded microchips that perform date-based calculations. Biomedical devices and other laboratory equipment may depend upon embedded date functions. If the chip receives what it perceives to be an invalid date, it may fail, impacting important experiments. False date comparisons may invalidate test results, leading to false conclusions.

NSF awardees should take appropriate actions to ensure that the NSF activity being supported is not adversely affected by the Year 2000 problem. Potentially affected items include: computer systems, databases, and equipment. If an application deals with future date, that application must be Year 2000 compliant before the first use of dates beyond December 31, 1999. The National Science Foundation should be notified if an awardee concludes that the Year 2000 will have a significant impact on its ability to carry out an NSF funded activity.

More detailed information concerning Year 2000 activities, plans, and issues can be found on the General Services Administration's web site at <http://www.itpolicy.gsa.gov> under the Year 2000 Information Directory.

Neal Lane

Director