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Fiscal Year 2018 Omnibus Boosts Funding for Research & Education [1]

June 1, 2018 by Natalie Barry [2]

This spring, Congress approved and President Trump signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 (H.R. 1625) [3] to fund the federal government through September 30. The law was enacted on March 23, 6 months overdue, but includes some of the largest increases to research and student aid programs in a decade. In total, the bill boosts federal research and development spending by 12.8% to $176.8 billion.

Big winners of interest to CU include the National Institutes of Health, which received a $3 billion increase rather than a $7.2 billion cut proposed by the Trump administration; NASA, which was boosted by $1.1 billion; and Department of Energy (DOE) research programs, which were increased by nearly $1 billion despite a $1.7 billion proposed cut. The omnibus also boosts funding for several programs targeted for elimination by the White House, including DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy, which received a $47 million increase and the National Endowment for the Humanities, which received a $2 million bump. The legislation also provides $14.9 billion (+ 6.1%) for Department of Defense Science & Technology programs; $7.8 billion (+ 4%) for the National Science Foundation; $507.5 billion (+ 6.3%) for NOAA Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; and $1.2 billion (+ 26%) for the National Institutes of Standards and Technology.

The bill also rejects reforms proposed by the White House and incorporated in House legislation to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, which would shrink or eliminate essential student aid programs such as Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, and Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

With its work on fiscal 2018 in the rearview, Congress has now turned its attention to fiscal 2019 appropriations. Last month, both House [4] and Senate [5] appropriators released their respective spending allocations for each of the 12 appropriations subcommittees. House appropriators have already reported half of their annual spending bills to the floor, including Energy-Water, Agriculture, Military Construction Veterans-Affairs, Legislative Branch, Commerce-Justice-Science and Transportation-Housing and Urban Development. Senate appropriators have approved just two measures so far, Energy-Water and Agriculture, but are expected to send a three-bill package comprised of Energy-Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction-Veterans Affairs to the floor in June.

Finally, the White House sent Congress a rescission package (H.R. 3 [6]) last month, which proposes $15.2 billion in spending cuts across 10 federal departments. Nearly half of the proposed cuts would come from the Children's Health Insurance Program. The rescissions package also cuts programs that combat infectious diseases like the Ebola virus. *The Budget Act of 1974* allows the president to propose cuts to federal budgets up to 45 days after a spending law has passed. Congress then has 45 days to vote on the measure, which only

requires a simple majority to pass in the Senate. House leaders have hinted that they will vote on an amended version of H.R. 3 in early June. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he will consider the recissions package if the House passes it.

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