

U.S. Senate,

Committee on Finance,
Washington, DC, November 19, 2008.

Dr. Arden L. Bement, Jr.
Director, National Science Foundation, Wilson Boulevard,
Arlington, VA.

Dear Director Bement: As a senior member of the United States Senate and the Ranking Member of the Committee on Finance (Committee), I have a duty under the Constitution to conduct oversight into the actions of executive branch agencies, including the activities of the National Science Foundation (NSF). In this capacity, I must ensure that NSF properly fulfills its mission to advance the public's welfare and makes responsible use of the public funding provided for scientific studies and education. Research and educational programs sponsored by the NSF may influence public opinion and can affect actions taken by the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

I would like to bring to your attention my concerns about the apparent lack of oversight regarding conflicts of interest relating to the almost \$6 billion in annual grants that are distributed by the NSF. As you know, institutions receiving an NSF research grant are required to ``manage'' the grantee's conflicts of interest.

In particular, I am concerned about a radio show that discusses psychology and neuroscience called ``The Infinite Mind.'' This show, as I understand it, is: independently produced; distributed to over 300 public radio stations; and appears on National Public Radio's (NPR) satellite channel.

According to this show's website and promotional comments made during several of the show's episodes, ``The Infinite Mind'' claims to receive major underwriting from the NSF.

The host of the ``The Infinite Mind'' is research professor Dr. Frederick Goodwin. However, I have learned that while hosting this radio program, Dr. Goodwin also received substantial compensation from drug companies. In the fine print of an article he published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2003, Dr. Goodwin acknowledged that he ``has served on the speaker's bureaus of Glaxo, Solvay, Janssen, Pfizer, Lilly, AstraZeneca, and Bristol-Myers Squibb; and has served as a consultant for Glaxo, Solvay, Pfizer, Lilly, Bristol-Myers Squibb Elan, and Novartis.''

For example, over the last seven years, Dr. Goodwin has received over \$1.3 million in speaking fees and honoraria from GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) for giving over 480 talks. I discovered this fact through documents that I received from GSK.

For your review and future reference, I have attached a chart detailing the information that GSK supplied to my staff. Many of the payments to Dr. Goodwin were made through a company called Best Practice LLC (BP). Based upon independent research conducted by my staff, it appears that Dr. Goodwin founded BP along with several other scientists in the late nineties. It is my understanding that BP advises pharmaceutical companies.

As mentioned earlier, when one listens to ``The Infinite Mind'' there is an acknowledgment that NSF money helps to underwrite its production. Accordingly I would appreciate any information that NSF could provide regarding financial disclosure requirements applicable to this situation. It seems to me that if the federal government provides financial support for a radio program that is heard by hundreds of thousands of American citizens, then the financial transparency of that show's host is important.

In light of this, I would appreciate gaining a greater understanding of the NSF grants provided to ``The Infinite Mind'' and the applicable NSF policies relating either directly or indirectly to financial disclosure. Accordingly, please respond to the following questions and requests for information. For each response, please repeat the enumerated request followed by the appropriate answer. The time span of this request covers January 2000 to the present.

(1) Please provide a list of all NSF funds that have supported ``The Infinite Mind.'' For each grant, please provide the following:

- a. Name of grant and/or contract;
- b. Topic of grant/contract; and
- c. Amount of funding for grant/contract;
- d. Amount of funding provided in grant/contract for the host of the show; and
- e. Supporting documents on financial disclosure, pertinent to the grant/contract.

(2) Please provide a list of all NSF grants, if any, made to Dr. Frederick Goodwin. For each grant, please provide the following:

- a. Name of grant;
- b. Topic/purpose of the grant; and
- c. Amount of funding for the grant.

(3) For each of the above identified grants, please answer the following questions regarding financial disclosure:

- a. Please explain the applicable NSF rules on financial disclosure required for the grant; and
- b. Please confirm that applicable rules on financial disclosure were followed by the grantee.

(4) Please provide a list of any other interactions that Dr. Goodwin has had with the NSF including membership on advisory boards, peer review on grants, or the like.

(5) Please provide a list of all NSF grants that have supported National Public Radio. For each grant, please provide the following:

- a. Name of grant;
- b. Topic of grant; and
- c. Amount of funding for grant.

(6) For each of the above identified grants/contracts, please answer the following questions regarding financial disclosure:

- a. Please explain the applicable NSF rules on financial disclosure required for the grant/contracts; and

b. Please confirm that applicable rules on financial disclosure were followed by the grantee.

In cooperating with the Committee's review, no documents, records, data, or other information related to these matters, either directly or indirectly, shall be destroyed, modified, removed, or otherwise made inaccessible to the Committee.

I request your prompt attention to this matter. In addition, I would request you provide this information to me no later than December 3, 2008. If you have any questions, please contact my Committee staff, Paul Thacker. Any formal correspondence should be sent electronically in PDF searchable format to Brian_Downey@finance-rep.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley,
Ranking Member