



Competitive Programs at CSREES: The Keys to Future Health and Prosperity

The United States has a university-based system that integrates agriculture, health, and environmental research with higher education and public outreach activities. This unique system is a partnership between America's land-grant and related universities and the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES).

Some CSREES programs are administered under formulae that provide each state and territory with sufficient funds to underwrite vital agriculture and natural resource research stations and extension offices. However, many other programs require scientists and professionals from universities across the nation to compete directly against each other in peer-reviewed competitions.

Both Congress and the administration have recognized the enormous value of CSREES competitive programs in recent years by providing some modest increases. However, much more must be done:

- America's farmers and foresters need additional genomic data and biotechnology tools to expand food and fiber production, processing, and international trade.
- U.S. healthcare professionals need greater insight into the relationships between diet and health.
- Extension specialists and their clients need expanded knowledge about water quality and quantity to

help protect the environment and safeguard our food system.

- University educators need additional funding to train new generations of food, agriculture, and natural resource scientists (many of whom now turn to better-funded disciplines).

NASULGC believes that CSREES competitive programs must continue to expand to address such urgent unmet needs. After all, these CSREES programs support leading-edge research, extension, and teaching efforts that:

- Explore the linkages between food and health, thereby helping to combat obesity and chronic diseases.
- Provide innovative new methods to fight insects, weeds, and plant/animal diseases on farms, forests, and ranches.
- Establish new crops, improve livestock, and establish new economic opportunities through genomics and molecular biology.
- Create better food and processing techniques, leading to higher values and greater profitability.
- Help keep pathogens and other dangers from our air, water, soil, plants, and animals.
- Generate new economic opportunities to sustain and grow rural communities.

NASULGC supports the President's FY 2006 budget recommendation, which represents a substantial percentage increase in the National Research Initiative. We also support increases in three other programs:

- Graduate Fellowships encourage outstanding students to pursue graduate degrees in critical areas such as animal and plant biotechnology; food engineering; forest products; human nutrition and food science; food marketing and management; agribusiness; and water science.
- Institution Challenge Grants help cultivate the next generation of agricultural scientists, food producers, and business professionals by funding educational enhancements.
- International Science & Education Grants allow faculty and students in U.S. food, agriculture, and natural resource disciplines to learn more about living, competing, and working in an increasingly interdependent world.

NASULGC'S PRIORITY REQUESTS FOR FY 2006:

- National Research Initiative... \$250 m
- Institution Challenge Grants... \$7.5 m
- International Science... & Education Grants... \$1.5 m
- Graduate Fellowships... \$6.0 m