VP José testifies before US House Subcommittee on Research and Science Education

Indiana University Vice President for Research Jorge José testified before the United States House Subcommittee on Research and Science Education on Tuesday, July 26, 2011. José was one of four experts invited to testify at a hearing on “The Merit Review Process: Ensuring Limited Federal Resources are Invested in the Best Science.”

The Subcommittee, which oversees the National Science Foundation, heard testimony on ways in which the Foundation’s merit review process can be strengthened while addressing the challenges of limited funding, multiple priorities, and increasing numbers of submitted proposals.

José, whose research has been funded for many years by the NSF, has also served on NSF review panels, and as an advisor for strategic planning at both the NSF and the National Institutes of Health. His testimony emphasized the importance of continued robust federal funding for scientific research and the value of the merit review system for “ensuring that federal funds are used to support the most important and far-reaching scientific research.”

“A very large number of scientific problems are interesting in principle,” José noted, “but a much smaller subset of those problems is important.” The process of peer review “is the best way to identify the important problems.”

José also emphasized the importance of continued efforts to increase the number of underrepresented groups participating in scientific research and education, efforts that for a decade have been at the center of the NSF “broader impacts criteria” for merit review of funding proposals. In June, the National Science Board recommended an expanded set of broader impacts criteria, as mandated in the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010.

“Increasing the pool of talented and trained scientists,” José said, “in turn enhances American economic competitiveness and leadership in scientific research, discovery, and innovation.”

Other witnesses before the Subcommittee were Dr. Cora Marrett, Deputy Director of the NSF; Dr. Keith R. Yamamoto, Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of California at San Francisco, and Dr. Nancy B. Jackson, President of the American Chemical Society.
