

National Science Foundation – Updates for 2020 & 2021

Dr. Rebecca Ferrell, Program Director, Biological Anthropology

- The Biological Anthropology (BA) program at the National Science Foundation (NSF) continues to support research at the faculty and dissertation levels, with expenditures (per fiscal year) of several million dollars for standard awards and \$800K+ for dissertation improvement grants. Program website: https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5407
- Dr. Siobhán Mattison, a human behavioral ecologist from the University of New Mexico and program director (rotator) for the Cultural Anthropology (CA) program, has split her time between the CA and BA programs since shortly after her arrival at NSF in the Fall of 2019. On top of her many other responsibilities to CA and a number of cross-division/directorate programs, she generously contributes her expertise, ideas, and time to the BA program, which is greatly appreciated.
- In late 2020, the BA program was given the green light to formally advertise for a second program director (rotator) position to join Dr. Ferrell in administering the program. As of April 2021, the search is in process. The addition of a second program director aligns with BA programmatic topics discussed by the 2019 Committee of Visitors for the Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences.
- A new NSF Director was named in 2020: Dr. Sethuraman Panchanathan, from Arizona State University (https://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=300793). Dr. Panchanathan will lead with a strong focus on partnerships and innovation (<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/371/6525/105.summary>). He succeeds outgoing Director, Dr. France Córdoba (<https://physicstoday.scitation.org/doi/10.1063/PT.6.4.20200327a/full/>).
- The NSF responded to the COVID pandemic with a call for RAPID research proposals. Roughly 900 COVID RAPID awards were made (approx. \$150M) across NSF in 2020, in addition to a substantial number of non-RAPID COVID/pandemic related awards. NSF has also implemented some proposal and award flexibilities for the research community and for existing grantees during this unprecedented time.
- President Biden's first budget request proposes a 20% increase in the NSF budget, including plans for a new directorate focused on emerging technologies and innovation (<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2021/04/biden-s-first-budget-request-goes-big-science>). The actual fiscal year 2022 budget will be determined through congressional approval and may differ from the president's request. Also, the way in which funds will be distributed among the directorates within NSF are not known at this time.