



A Response to "National Science Foundation Funding of Domestic Archaeology in the United States: Where the Money Ain't"

John E. Yellen; Mary W. Greene; Richard T. Louttit

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tinually decreased its constant-dollar allotments and funding intensity in this research area over the recent past seems contrary to the requirements of the discipline.

It is hoped that archaeologists will carefully examine the funding made available to them in terms of their needs, as well as with regard to the effects of inflation and changes in size and growth of their discipline. Minimally, questions of support for archaeological research should not be addressed only in terms of current dollars. It is hoped that consideration of funding intensity for archaeology will lead to a better understanding of the fiscal realities facing the discipline.

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A RESPONSE TO "NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION FUNDING OF DOMESTIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE UNITED STATES: WHERE THE MONEY AIN'T"

John E. Yellen, Mary W. Greene, and Richard T. Louttit

A reply to Casteel.

The purpose of this brief reply is to set Dr. Casteel's analysis of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) support of U.S. archaeology in a broader context.

The goal of the NSF's anthropology program is to support basic anthropological research. Within that broad context the program does not establish areas of high or low priority. Rather it proceeds on a proposal-by-proposal basis, and those projects judged most meritorious receive support regardless of subdiscipline or geographic area. In fiscal year 1978, as Casteel's data show, support for U.S. archaeological research was dramatically lower than that of previous years. However, in that year the overall "success rate" for research proposals was exactly 20%; i.e., funds were available to support only one of every five proposals submitted. The comparable

John E. Yellen, Program Director for Anthropology; Mary W. Greene, Associate Program Director for Anthropology; Richard T. Louttit, Director, Division of Behavioral and Neural Sciences; National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C. 20550

“success rate” for U.S. archaeological proposals was 30%, and thus such projects competed at a better than average rate in the review process. The foundation’s approach to supporting research in general, and U.S. archaeology in particular, has remained unchanged over the entire period covered by Casteel’s data. As Table 1 shows, NSF funds for anthropology have increased above the rate of inflation for the last three years. This increased commitment to the discipline is particularly impressive in light of the foundation’s total financial growth of 8 to 9% per year. On the other hand, the number of research proposals submitted to the anthropology program increased on the average of 15% per year.

Thus while the foundation’s support for anthropology has increased over the last three years, it has become increasingly difficult for an individual research project to receive funding. The net effect has been to influence researchers to look elsewhere for alternative sources of support, and archaeologists working within the United States are a group fortunate enough to have a major alternative available. The passage of the Moss-Bennett bill and development of mitigation archaeology not only provided funds but also seem to have had a major impact on the direction of American archaeology. Since 1975, while the number of proposals to the NSF anthropology program has increased at an average rate of 15% per year, the absolute number of proposals submitted for U.S. archaeological research markedly decreased.

In his conclusion Casteel states, “that the NSF has continually decreased its constant-dollar allotments and funding intensity in this area of research over the recent past seems contrary to the requirements of the discipline.” The statement implies a policy on the foundation’s part against basic archaeological research in the United States and in this regard is incorrect. The foundation’s and the anthropology program’s actions are explained on the one hand by total budget constraints and on the other by the relative demands within the anthropological discipline. But, we do agree that basic research in U.S. archaeology is severely underfunded, as is similar work in other areas of anthropology.

Table 1. Increase in NSF Funding and Concomitant Proposal Success Rate.

Fiscal Year	% Increase in Total Dollars Awarded	Proposal Success Rate
1975	9%	35%
1976	4%	32%
1977	10%	26%
1978	20%	20%
1979 (estimated)	13%	20%

ERRATA

In the last issue a typographical error appeared in the title of the article by Gary S. Webster (*American Antiquity*, Vol. 44, No. 4, October 1979, pp. 816-820). The title should read, “Deer Hides and Tribal Confederacies: An Appraisal of Gramly’s Hypothesis.”

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In the review of *Archaeological Bibliography for Eastern North America* (*American Antiquity*, Vol. 44, No. 3, July 1979, p. 627), an outdated address for the Eastern States Archaeological Federation was given. The present address is as follows: Eastern States Archaeological Federation, Box 260, Washington, CT 06793.