

Opening Statement
The Honorable Vernon J. Ehlers (R- MI), Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Research and Science Education
Committee on Science and Technology
The State of Research Infrastructure at U.S. Universities

Tuesday, February 23, 2010

Universities must ensure they have state of the art science and technology facilities in order to remain at the cutting edge of research. With proper laboratory buildings, equipment, and computing systems, students will graduate well-prepared for the workforce. As the institutions represented here today know, the most innovative students are attracted to universities with the best facilities.

However, it is important that we recognize that the National Science Foundation's expertise lies in the support of peer-reviewed, basic research. That research often requires the use of various types of equipment and specialized facilities. Many scientific questions we are faced with today will only be answered through the use of very expensive facilities, such as ITER, that often require the participation of multiple countries to construct. There are also many smaller facility needs at our research institutions, some of which the NSF currently funds. However, I have some reservations about expanding this type of support, because it does not fit well into the primary mission and expertise of the NSF.

I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing today, and look forward to hearing from our witnesses how we can support high-quality, sustainable research and infrastructure at our universities.