

The NSF prepared a report entitled *Societal Implications of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology* in September 2000 and published it for broader public distribution in 2001 [9]. The proceedings were followed by various program solicitations and the assignment to the National Nanotechnology Coordination Office (NNCO) in 2001 of a monitoring role for potential unexpected societal implications. The NNCO also has the role of communicating with the public.

In 2003, a subgroup of the NSET Subcommittee, the Nanotechnology Environmental and Health Implications (NEHI) working group, was established to address environment, health, and safety (EHS) issues. Among those issues are identification and prioritization of EHS research needs and communication of information pertaining to the EHS aspects of nanomaterials to researchers and others who handle and use nanomaterials.

In another follow-up to the 2000 *Societal Implications* report, NSF has made support for social, ethical, and economic research studies a priority by (a) including this as a new theme in the NSF annual program solicitations since 2000; (b) requiring its nanotechnology research and education centers to address societal implications of the research performed in the respective center; and (c) conducting a study on the impact of technology and converging technologies from the nanoscale [10].

NSF has pursued the research and education themes “Nanoscale processes in the environment” and “Societal and Educational Implications of Nanotechnology” as part of its NNI programs since July 2000 (annual program solicitations NSF 00-119, 01-157, 02-148, 03-043, 03-044), and 100 examples of awards made in this area are posted on www.nsf.gov/nano, listed under Solicitations and Outcomes. Examples of projects supporting societal implications are given in Table 2.3. EPA has had annual program announcements in the STAR program with focus on nanotechnology and

Table 2.3
Examples of NNI Projects Supporting Social Implications Research

| Project | Agency | Institution |
|---|------------------------|---|
| Nanotechnology and its publics | NSF | Pennsylvania State University |
| Public information and deliberation in nanoscience and nanotechnology policy (SGER) | Interagency | North Carolina State University |
| Social and ethical research and education in agrifood nanotechnology (NIRT) | NSF | Michigan State University |
| From laboratory to society: developing an informed approach to nanoscale science and engineering (NIRT) | NSF | University of South Carolina |
| Database and innovation timeline for nanotechnology | NSF | UCLA |
| Social and ethical dimensions of nanotechnology | NSF | University of Virginia |
| Undergraduate exploration of nanoscience, applications and societal implications (NUE) | NSF | Michigan Technological University |
| Ethics and belief inside the development of nanotechnology (CAREER) | NSF | University of Virginia |
| All centers, NNIN and NCN have a societal implications components | NSF, DOE, DOD, and NIH | All nanotechnology centers and networks |