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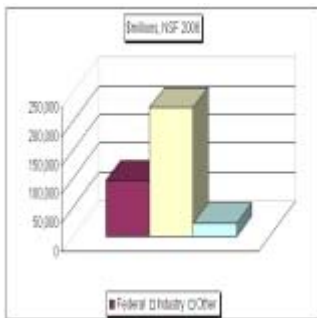
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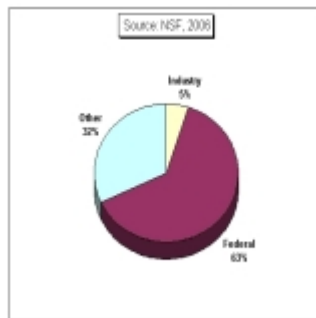
Special Feature: Business Financing for Your Research

Alan Kotok
United States
14 March 2008

Scientists at academic institutions usually turn to government and foundations for money to do their research, and for good reason: These sources provide the bulk of the funding for academic research. But the fluctuating federal research budgets of recent years, in Europe and Japan as well as the United States, have given researchers reasons to go looking for alternative funding sources.



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Business spends [more money on research and development](#) than the public and academic sectors combined (bar chart at left). But only a small proportion of that investment reaches academic researchers. In 2006, according to figures compiled by the U.S. National Science Foundation, industry spent [\\$2.4 billion at U.S. academic institutions](#). That's just 5% of total funding for academic research (pie chart), but it's still a nice chunk of change.

Speaking of change: That number hasn't changed much over

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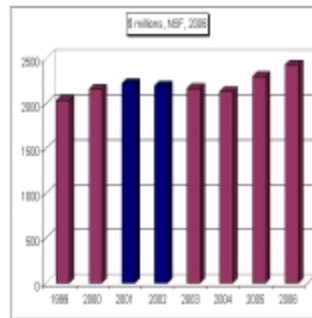
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time, in either direction. Businesses have roughly maintained their levels of academic research support (in current dollars) since 1999, declining only slightly in the years of slow economic growth that followed the 2001 recession (bar chart at right). Level funding (or a small decline) doesn't sound impressive in an era when researchers aspire to doubling research budgets, but steady private-sector funding can provide a small cushion given the ups and downs of federal support for science.



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Researchers who want to tap into this funding source should note that businesses often use different methods for engaging academic researchers. They also have different expectations, and maintain different kinds of working relationships with their academic collaborators, than governments and foundations. [Elisabeth Pain](#), our contributing editor for southern Europe, deals with the possibly sticky ethical and practical issues that are part of the deal when you accept research funding from profit-seeking entities.

How do academic scientists get started in their search for industry financing? Science writer [Siri Carpenter](#) describes how businesses find and select academic researchers, and how academic researchers can improve their chances of getting found.

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Alan Kotok is managing editor of *Science Careers*.

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