



**Major Savings and Reforms  
in the  
President's 2009 Budget**

**FEBRUARY 2008**

## Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Discretionary Proposal University Nuclear Energy Program

### Funding Summary (In millions of dollars)

	<u>2008 Enacted</u>	<u>2009 Proposed</u>	<u>Change From 2008</u>
Budget Authority .....	15	---	-15

### Administration Proposal and Impact

The University Nuclear Energy Program assisted universities in maintaining research and education reactors, as well as providing dedicated fellowships for students studying nuclear engineering. This program has historically been located in the Department of Energy (DOE), but beginning in 2007, the Administration proposed termination. In 2008, the Congress moved responsibility for the education assistance activity to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The program initially came about in response to low enrollment. At this point, target levels for undergraduate enrollment have been met, and the number of universities offering nuclear-related programs also has increased. In addition, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission expects to receive from the nuclear industry approximately 20 combined construction and operating licenses for upward of 30 new nuclear power reactors. These trends reflect renewed interest in nuclear power. Universities, along with nuclear industry societies and utilities are expected to continue to invest in university research reactors, students, and faculty members and, therefore, students will continue to be drawn into this course of study. Consequently, federal assistance is no longer necessary, and the Budget proposes termination of this program. This termination is also supported by the fact that the program was unable to demonstrate results from its activities when reviewed using the Program Assessment Rating Tool. The Budget includes \$3.7 million at DOE to continue supporting reactor fuel services for universities.

There are other more appropriate mechanisms to support nuclear education. For example, in 2009 through its Nuclear Energy Research Initiative, DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy will designate at least 20 percent of funds appropriated to its research and development programs for work to be performed at university and research institutions. This commitment to strengthening the Nation's nuclear education infrastructure directly supports the goals of the American Competes Act of 2007.

### Background

The University Nuclear Energy Program was designed to address declining enrollment levels among U.S. nuclear engineering programs. Since the late 1990s, enrollment levels in nuclear education programs have tripled, although the University Nuclear Energy Program is not able to demonstrate that its actions are responsible for this increase. Additionally, the program projected that U.S. enrollment levels reaching upward of 1,500 students would be needed by the year 2015 – with enrollments having reached this level in 2005, there is no longer a need for this program.