

## The Rise and Decline of Politicized Language in Scientific Funding: An Updated Analysis of NSF Grants, 1990–2025

**Date:** July 30, 2026.

**Technical Objective:** Identify and Assess Ideological Trends in a Large Corpus.

**Subject:** National Science Foundation Grant Abstracts

**Data Acquisition:** July 1, 2026.

### Summary

- Rasmussen (2021) used natural language processing to analyze the abstracts of successful National Science Foundation (NSF) grants. The report found that the percent of NSF grant abstracts containing highly politicized DEI terms had increased consistently between 1990 and 2020.
- We replicate the term-counting analysis in Rasmussen (2021), extending the endpoint of the analysis from 2020 to 2025, to document how the language of funded NSF grants changed through the first year of the second Trump administration.
- We find that the frequency of documents containing DEI language fell sharply in 2025, the first year of the second Trump administration. In 2021, the frequency of all grants containing one of the politicized terms: “equity,” “diversity,” “inclusion,” “gender,” “marginalize,” “underrepresented,” or “disparity”, peaked at 34.12%. This number held roughly steady through 2024 before dropping to just 9.00% in 2025 – a number approaching early 2000s levels.
- A decline in the frequency of documents containing DEI language can be seen across all fields. The largest drop in percentage-point terms is in Education & Human Resources, the most politicized field in 2021, which went from 59.22% to 8.79%. Meanwhile, in Biological Sciences the drop over the same 2021–2025 period has been from 46.30% to 20.58%; Computer & Information Science & Engineering from 31.44% to 11.99%; Engineering from 37.09% to 7.55%; Geosciences from 30.42% to 9.25%; Mathematical & Physical Sciences from 27.06% to 6.26%; Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences from 37.40% to 4.87%; and Technology Partnership from 7.54% to 4.40%.
- Taken together, the updated results show a swift decline in the use of politicized terms in NSF grant awards under the second Trump administration. This suggests that changes in presidential administration can impact the politicization of government science funding.

## Introduction

[Rasmussen \(2021\)](#) analyzed the abstracts of successful National Science Foundation (NSF) grants awarded between 1990 and 2020, documenting a sustained increase in the prevalence of terms associated with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This report replicates and extends Rasmussen's term-counting analysis through 2025, allowing us to examine whether those trends continued in the years following the original study and through the first year of the second Trump administration.

## Method

The NSF provides public access to archives of awards granted in every fiscal year since 1967. The data available in these archives do not include the full proposal texts, which are often lengthy and detailed documents, but only the abstracts of the proposals, which are generally only several hundred words in length. Additionally, all awards prior to 1986 do not have abstracts, and most awards do not have abstracts until 1988. Given these limitations of the data, this work only analyzes awards from 1990-2025. Other information provided in these archives for each grant are the identities and institutions of the primary investigators, the award amount, the title of the proposal, and the NSF directorate that granted the award. There are eight directorates that are responsible for disbursing the majority of NSF funding: Biological Sciences; Computer & Information Science & Engineering; Education & Human Resources; Engineering; Geosciences; Mathematical & Physical Sciences; Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences; and Technology, Innovation & Partnerships (labeled "Technology Partnership" in the figures). All analysis conducted in this work is broken up by these eight directorates.

We use a method called "term counting" for the analysis. This method simply counts the number of documents containing some form of a given term. For example, for "inclusion" terms we look for documents containing any of the following forms: "inclusive," "inclusivity," and "inclusion." Even if a document contains multiple instances of different forms of a given term, it will only be counted once. The percentage of documents containing a particular term over the total number of documents in each NSF directorate in a given year is reported.

## Results

The figures below demonstrate a considerable rise in the frequency of award abstracts that contain selected politicized terms since 1990, followed by a modest decline after the 2021 peak and a precipitous drop in 2025.

As of 2025, across all fields 9.00% of successful grant abstracts contained at least one of the terms "equity," "diversity," "inclusion," "gender," "marginalize," "underrepresented," or "disparity." This is down from a peak of 34.12% in 2021 (Figure 1), a decline which can be seen in every field (Figure 2). In Education & Human Resources, which was the most politicized field in 2021 at 59.22%, the number has gone down to just 8.79% as of 2025. As of 2025, the most politicized field is Biological Sciences at 20.58%, followed by Computer & Information Science & Engineering at 11.99%. Meanwhile, the least politicized fields are Technology Partnership at 4.40%, followed by Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences at 4.87%.

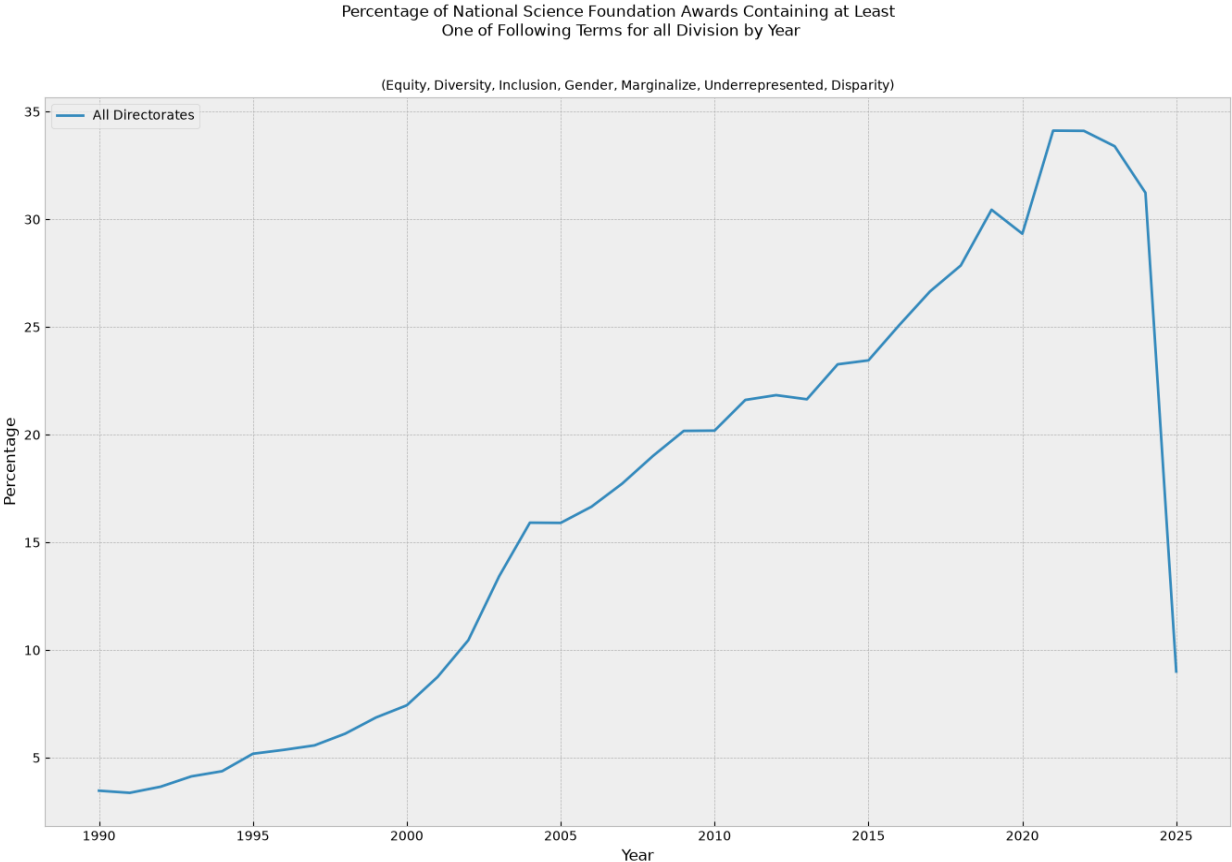


Figure 1

Percentage of National Science Foundation Awards Containing at Least One of Following Terms per Division by Year

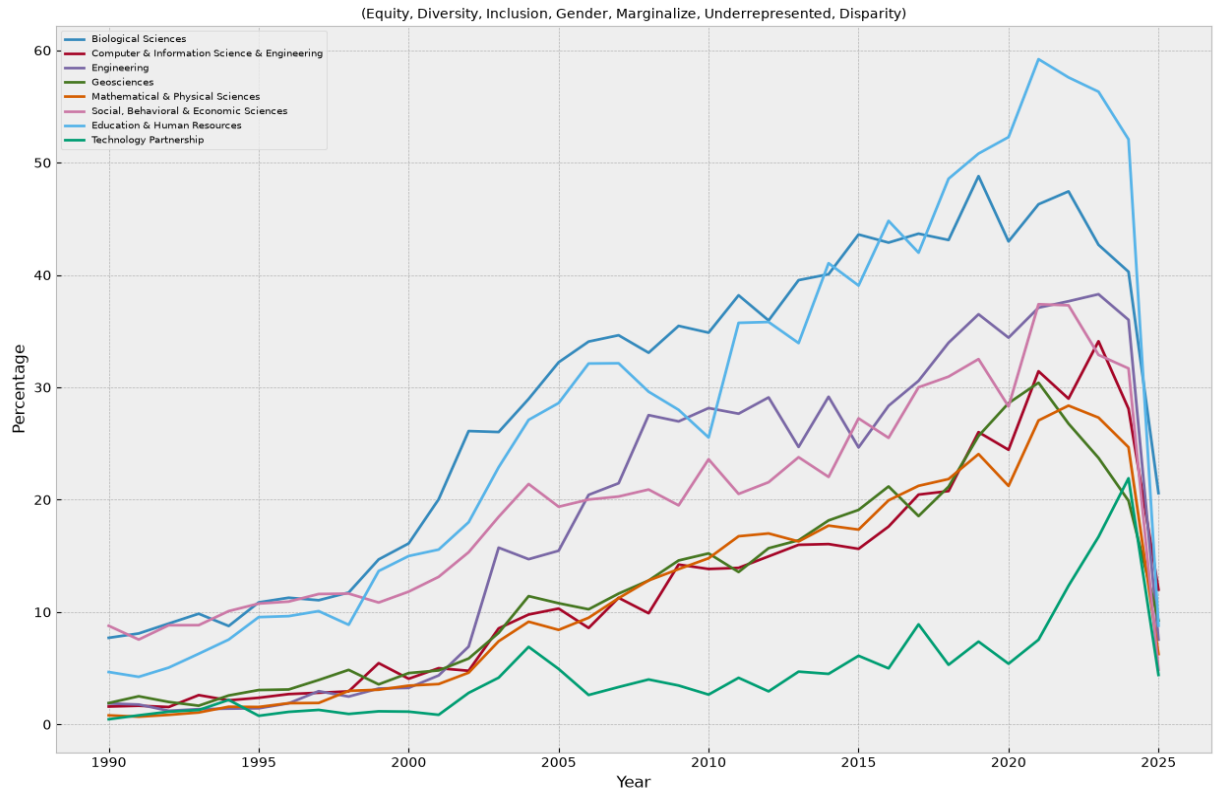


Figure 2

Percentage of NSF Award Abstracts Containing Given Terms by Year

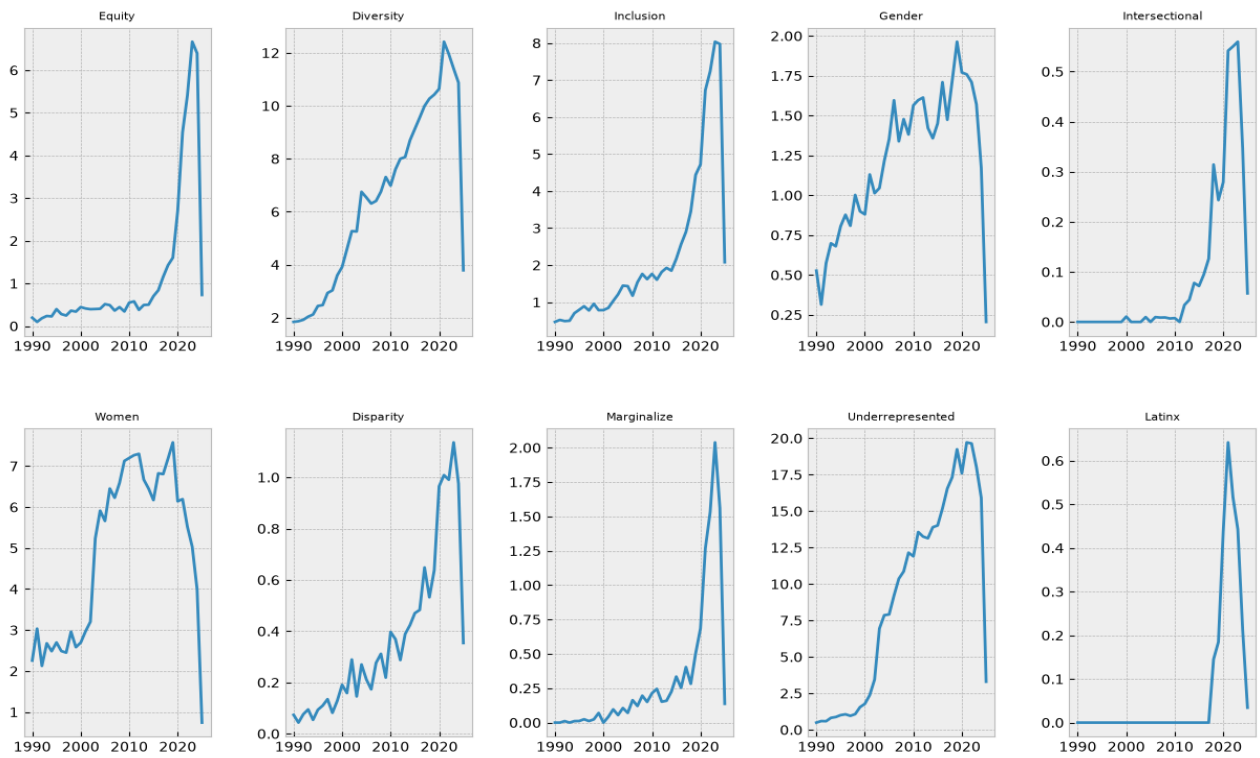


Figure 3

Total Funding of National Science Foundation Awards Containing at Least One of Following Terms per Division by Year

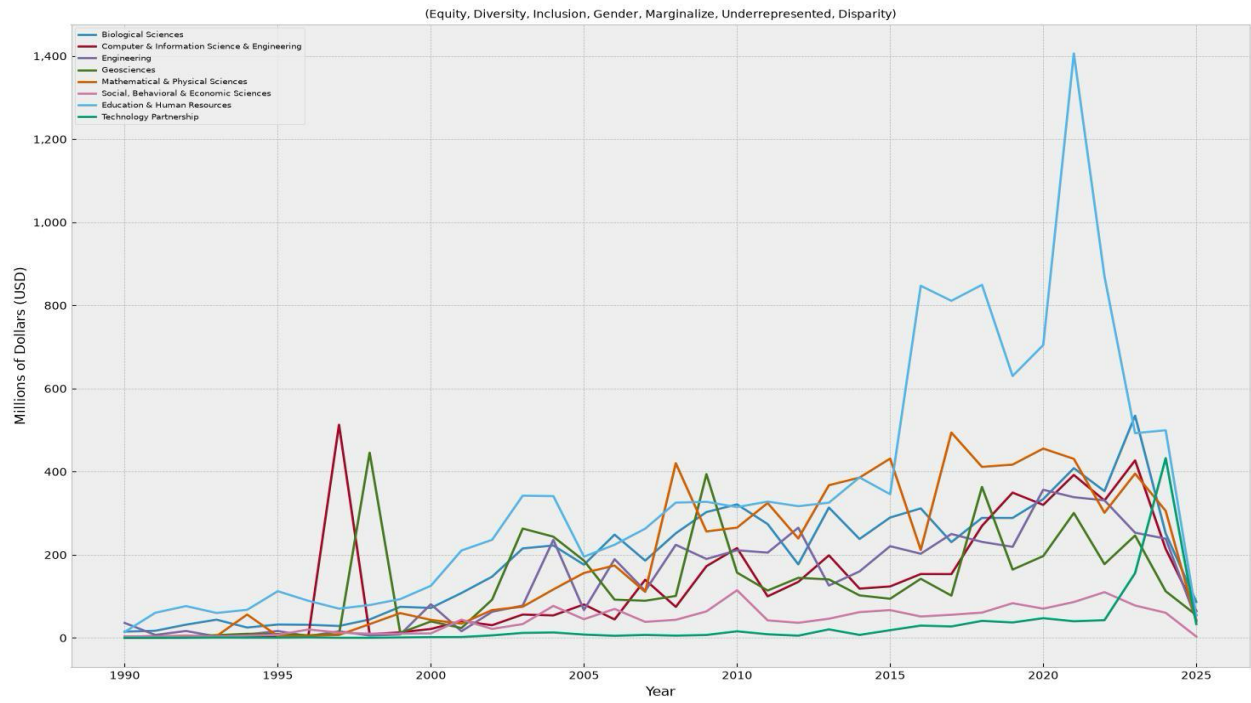


Figure 4

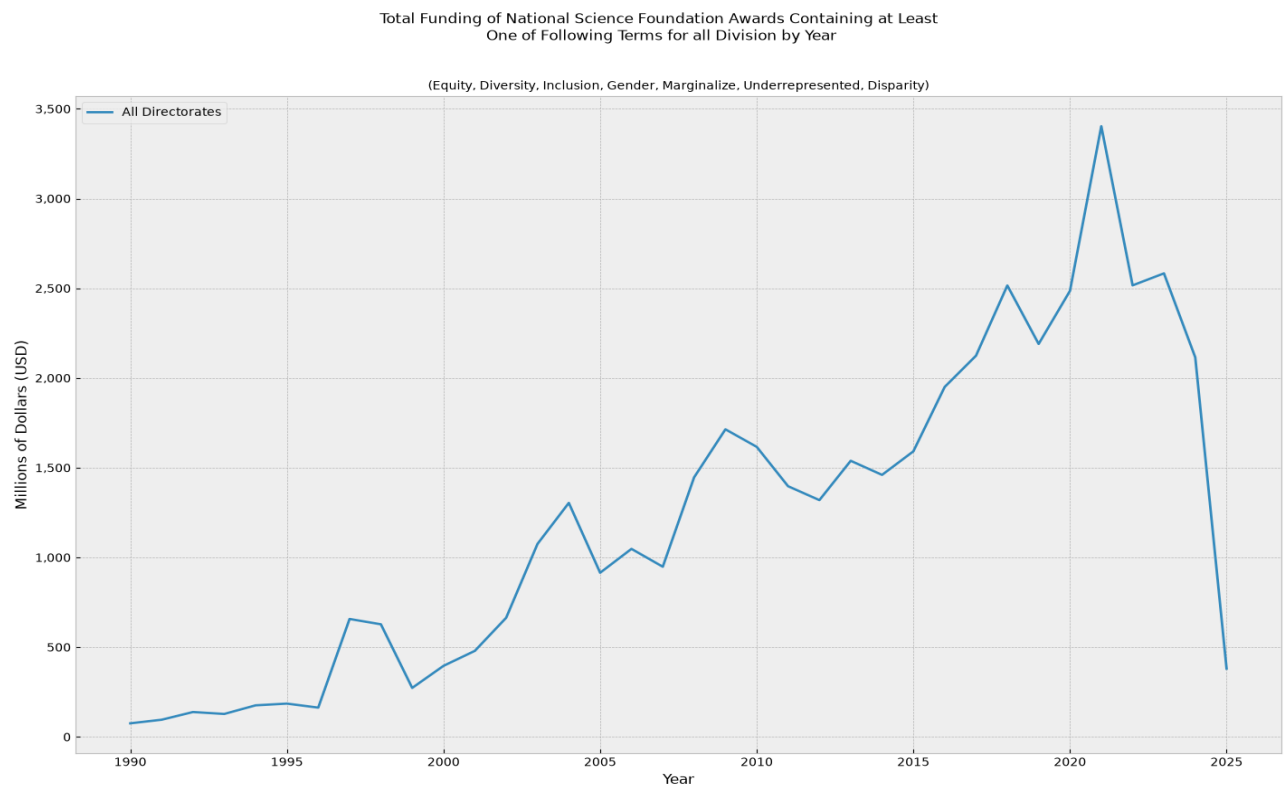


Figure 5

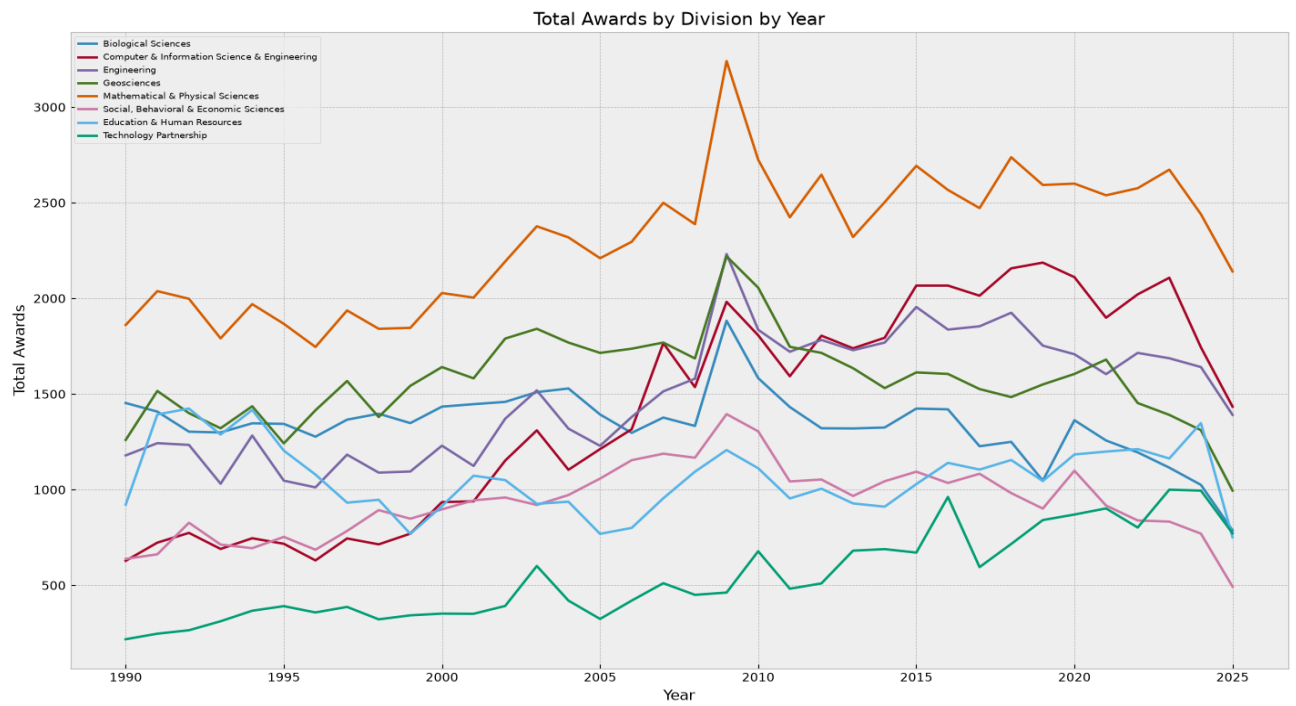


Figure 6

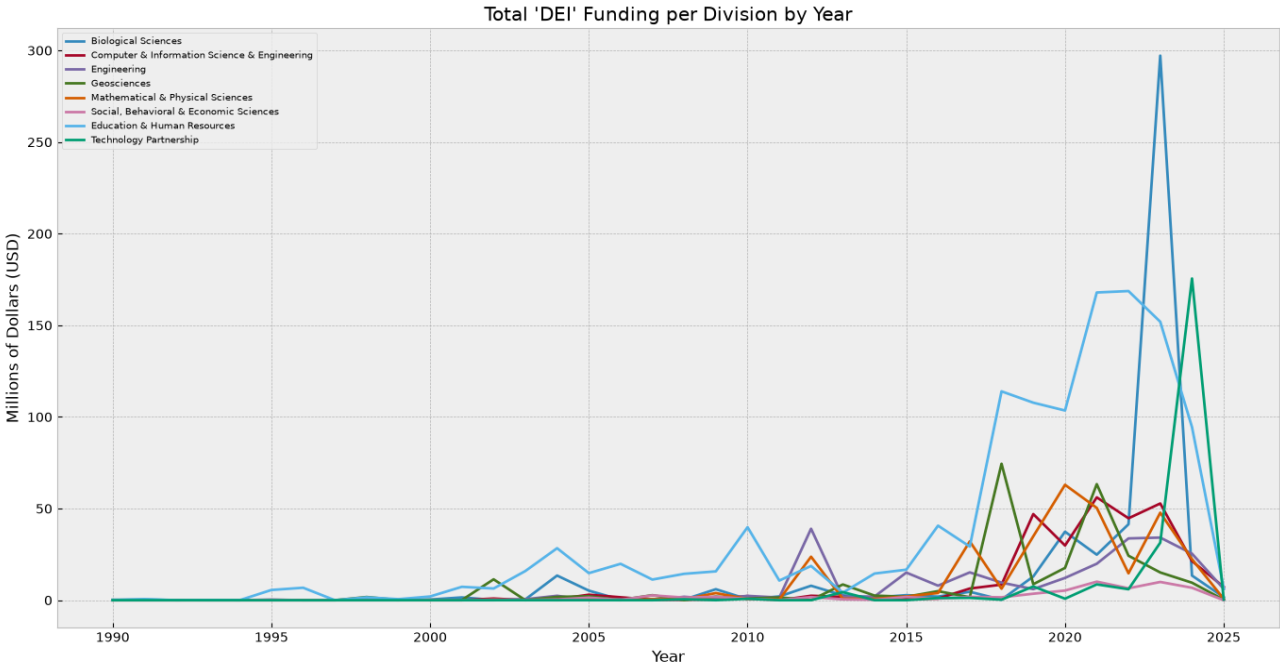


Figure 7