New Biology Foundation Off to a Good Start

A year ago the Life Sciences Research Foundation (LSRF)* opened for business as a small outfit established to award postdoctoral fellowships in biology with money from industry. The idea, according to LSRF president Donald D. Brown of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, was to get industry to agree to support postdocs in nontargeted research projects under an arrangement in which industry could choose neither the fellow nor the area of research. LSRF started out with just two sponsors willing to accept those conditions—Hoffmann–La Roche and Monsanto. Said Brown at the time, "This experiment is not proven by any means. We'll have to disband if we can't get more response from industry" (*Science*, 7 May 1982, p. 603).

But now six additional corporations have signed on and others have expressed an interest. It looks as if the fledgling foundation, which has just awarded ten fellowships, won't have to disband. The new sponsors are Pioneer Hi-Bred International, the Schering Plough Foundation, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, Merck Sharp & Dohme Research Laboratories, Hoechst-Roussel Pharmaceuticals, and the Syntex Company. "It was through the good offices of Dr. Howard Goodman that Hoechst-Roussel heard about our Foundation," Brown says. "Perhaps we are developing a grapevine." (Goodman is director of the department of molecular biology at the Massachusetts General Hospital which was created by a $70-million contract from the parent Hoechst firm—Hoechst AG of Germany.)

Although each fellow is identified as the individual recipient of support from one of the foundation's corporate sponsors, and is encouraged to visit the sponsor's labs, the fellows will work in academic institutions of their own choosing. The fellowship carries an annual stipend of approximately $30,000, half for research and half for living expenses. The corporations have no claim to patents that might arise from the research and, Brown says, part of the agreement is that the postdocs will not work on projects within the university that are associated with any prior patent arrangements.

The important point of the LSRF, Brown believes, is to foster nontargeted research in all areas of biology and to support scientists who want a second postdoctoral fellowship in order to change fields. "Granting agencies are very conservative and it's hard to change fields. All the pressures today are against people switching," says Brown, who reports that two of LSRF's first nine fellows are "second postdocs."

The first crop of fellows was selected from among 200 applicants by a peer review committee instructed to pick fellows solely on the basis of scientific merit, not the potential commercial applicability of the research.

—**Barbara J. Culliton**

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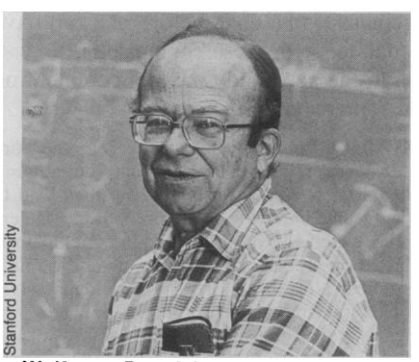
End of an Era at SLAC

Wolfgang Panofsky has announced his intent to step down as director of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) on 30 August next year. He has held the post since 1961.

Panofsky, who will remain at Stanford as a tenured professor, is relinquishing the directorship of SLAC in keeping with an informal policy among top SLAC officials to step down when they reach age 65. He will turn 65 in April 1985.



Stanford University

Wolfgang Panofsky

Stanford has set up a search committee to nominate a successor. The appointment will be made by the Stanford Board of Trustees, and is subject to approval by the Department of Energy. The current deputy director, Sidney Drell, says he will not be a candidate for the top post.—**Colin Norman**

Satellite Troubles Curtail Spacelab Data

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has decided not to ferry a critical communications satellite into space during the eighth mission of the shuttle in August, agency officials announced on 6 May. The postponement is due to uncertainty about the reliability of a rocket that was to ferry the satellite from the shuttle's low earth orbit to a permanent station 22,350 miles above the earth.

In April, a similar rocket malfunctioned, leaving an identical communications satellite spinning wildly in the wrong orbit (*Science*, 22 April, p. 385). NASA officials believe that they can correct the first satellite's orbit, but they are unwilling to gamble on a second launch until the cause of the rocket malfunction has been identified.

As a result, only one satellite will be available to relay high-speed data transmissions from scientific experiments aboard Spacelab, a $1-billion laboratory constructed by the European Space Agency. Spacelab is now scheduled for launch aboard the shuttle on 30 September. With only one relay satellite, roughly 40 percent of the 77 experiments aboard Spacelab will suffer some loss of data.

Orbital correction for the first satellite will require a month, and then the satellite's transmitters must go through an extended check-out period. Agency officials are concerned about the possibility of damage that will not become apparent until the orbital maneuvers have been completed. "There clearly could have been damage when we went through separation" from the booster rocket, one official said, but no one can be certain until the check-out period has begun.

Should the first satellite prove inoperable, the launch of Spacelab will have to be delayed until next summer, forcing a substantial increase in costs for the Europeans and yet another reorganization of the experiments on board.

NASA hopes to know more about the rocket booster malfunction by midsummer.—**R. Jeffrey Smith**