
OMB Directive Will Cost NIH Loss of 1500 Grants

Until just a few weeks ago, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget included funds enough to pay 6500 new and competing grants in fiscal year (FY) 1985—an extraordinarily large number in recent years. However, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a directive during the last week of December ordering NIH to scale back to only 5000 grants. The budgetary move would not only slash the number of funded grants for FY 1985 but also would have the effect of lowering the base in future years.

When President Reagan signed the NIH appropriations bill last fall, it gave the institutes a record-breaking total of \$5.15 billion. As the President said, "In 1985, the NIH will receive its largest increase in appropriated funds in history." After wrangling over funding for new grants during recent years, the NIH was gratified to find itself in a position to award 6500 grants this time around.

But the OMB's money-saving directive will change all that. According to Washington health lobbyists, word of the directive first came to light when some scientists whose grants had been slated for funding received calls from NIH grant officials saying, sorry, there's no money after all.

Piecing various bits of information together, the situation appears to be this. OMB has told NIH, first of all, to fund only 5000 new grants and, second, to "forward-fund" 12 percent or 600 of that 5000 for the full 3-year life of the grant. What this amounts to is a clever maneuver by which the NIH's budgetary bottom line for FY 1985 remains unchanged but which effectively sets aside millions of dollars of what had been 1985 money for funding in 1986 and 1987.

"This is not what Congress had in mind," one lobbyist told *Science*. In fact, language in the House-Senate conference report specifies 6500 as the figure for new grants. As yet, Congress has received no official word of OMB's directive. Neither Senator Lowell P. Weicker, Jr. (R-Conn.), nor Representative William H. Natcher (D-Ky.), chairmen of the congressional committees that oversee NIH

appropriations has made any public comment on the matter.

But federal officials concede that OMB is operating well within its legal authority even though its directive plainly counters congressional intent. Details about the budget cuts will be made public when the President's budget for FY 1986 goes to Congress early in February. Indications are that some institutes will be hit harder than others.

One source who opposes the OMB's directive nonetheless described it as a "very imaginative way of coming to grips with a push for budget-cutting." Other less imaginative but more open ways of achieving the same goal would be for the President to directly ask Congress for a rescission of funds or for the NIH to ask for reprogramming authority to make changes itself. Neither of these routes, which would have generated considerable opposition among biomedical scientists and their supporters on Capitol Hill, was taken.

There is not much that Congress could do to override OMB, which clearly has the upper hand in this matter. But Congress could make up the difference by adding on extra funds for the 1986 NIH budget.

—BARBARA J. CULLITON

MacArthur Puts \$25 Million into World Peace Studies

The MacArthur Foundation has announced the award of \$25 million in grants to 35 institutions in the United States and abroad for studies in international security. The foundation calls it "one of the most comprehensive philanthropic efforts ever launched to confront the problems posed by the threat of nuclear annihilation." It is also the biggest program ever launched by the foundation. An additional \$6 million is waiting in the wings.

The new Program on International Security is being directed by Ruth Adams, former editor of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*. The initiative follows 2 years of study directed by board members Jerome B. Wiesner, Jonas Salk, and Murray Gell-Mann. Among a stellar array of consultants to the project are Kenneth Prewitt of the Social Science Research Council,

David Hamburg of the Carnegie Corporation, and Seweryn Bialer of Columbia University.

The money, to be awarded in grants of varying sizes over the next 2 to 5 years, will more than double the funds available for independent research, says the foundation. It will be used for fellowships; expanded research, particularly cross-disciplinary studies and innovative projects; institutional support, and public education.

The largest grant is an allocation of \$6.24 million to the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) for the support of 32 pre- and postdoctoral fellowships and two mid-career fellowships each year over the next 5 years. The Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., will get a 5-year grant of \$1.7 million to stimulate innovative research.

A fundamental aim of the program is to expand the social science presence in international security studies. Prewitt notes that ever since the advent of nuclear weapons this field has been dominated by physicists and foreign policy specialists. SSRC figures show that fewer than 1 percent of doctorates awarded in the social and behavioral sciences, political science and economics over the past 5 years have been for work on security-related issues.

Says Wiesner: "Prevailing conceptions . . . seriously underestimate the degree to which critical events in the world emanate from factors other than military power. We must transform the field of international security so it adequately reflects the impact of competing world economies, historical interactions, the dynamics of large organizations, collective politics and individual psychology of strategic rivalry, and the uncharted consequences of unbalanced social development."

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

White House Picks Calio to Head NOAA

After months of internal battling, the White House has finally settled on a new head for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): Anthony J. Calio, the current acting administrator, Calio's nomination, according to informed sources,