

looking forward to working aggressively with Moore and the new third member of the council, Deputy Secretary of Energy William Martin. Brown, who said he intended to "keep the heat on," indicated there would be more hearings in the spring. ■

ARTHUR L. ROBINSON

The M.D. Class of '86: Smaller, Deeper in Debt

The number of U.S. medical school graduates decreased slightly this year for the second year in a row. Data collected by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) indicate that the number of new physicians was down to 16,117 this year from a peak of 16,343 in 1984. Projections based on current enrollments indicate that the decline will continue. Applicants for admission to medical school this year numbered 32,893, 3,051 fewer than in 1985 and a third less than in the top year of 1974.

The downturn appears to mark an end to an era in which medical schools upped their enrollments and students competed for admission in increasing numbers. In recent years, most medical schools have capped enrollments or made small reductions in class size.

AAMC officials note that the schools have been subjected to strong financial pressures. Inflation in the late 1970's and early 1980's put a strain on medical school budgets. Federal capitation grants—payments based directly on enrollment—were progressively reduced in the later 1970's and ended in 1980. Many state legislatures have tightened support of state medical schools. The latter action seems to have been influenced by a shift from earlier warnings of a shortage of physicians to predictions of a surplus.

Students were directly affected when medical schools reacted to financial pressures by sharply increasing tuition charges. The higher costs of medical education are also reflected in the increased indebtedness of graduates. AAMC figures show that 82% of this year's graduates have incurred average debts of over \$33,000, a 37% increase above the average debt of graduates in 1982. The heavier debt burden, along with the high cost of starting in private medical practice is apparently affecting the form of practice graduates chose. Traditional private clinical practice was chosen by 58% of the 1986 class, down 7% from 1982. The rest expect to work in medical service organizations, including hospitals and group health maintenance organizations. ■

JOHN WALSH

Software Engineering Research Center Has Florida-Purdue Axis

A new software engineering research center established by the National Science Foundation will have a split personality or at least a double address—the University of Florida and Purdue University in Indiana. The center is being set up with a 5-year grant totalling \$500,000 from NSF. Its sponsors, in addition to NSF, are industry, academic institutions, and the Florida state government.

The geographic gap separating the partners is unusual for such NSF centers, but is likely to be less so in the future, according to an NSF source. As the number of centers in the foundation's Industry-University Cooperative Research Centers program has increased—by present count there are 39—industry has urged that the centers combine institutions with complementary capabilities. Purdue is rated strong in software metrics—measuring the performance of software programs. Florida has an acknowledged expertise in data base technology. These were seen as mutually reinforcing the center's prospects of achieving its objectives. These are to increase the productivity of those engaged in writing software and improve the quality and reliability of the product. NSF will be receptive to similar institutional pairings in the future.

In addition to NSF funding, the new center has a pledge of \$300,000 over 5 years from the Florida High Technology and Industry Council. Further support will come from \$30,000-a-year membership fees from industry sponsors. So far, the center has signed up 11 members. ■ JOHN WALSH

Activists Rebuffed in Monkey Court Case

A federal appeals court on 4 September ruled that an animal rights group does not have legal standing to contest animal use in research. The ruling may be a definitive setback for activists seeking judicial intervention in this area.

The case was originally brought by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in 1981. The group has been trying to control the disposition of 15 monkeys that were in the custody of the National Institutes of Health for 5 years following the investigation of Maryland researcher Edward Taub (Taub was later cleared of charges of maltreatment). NIH shipped the

animals off to the Delta Regional Primate Center in Louisiana last July.

The case was the first of its kind to be addressed by a federal court and is a "very substantial decision in terms of the legal reasoning" according to Richard Verville, a lawyer for 69 groups that filed an amicus brief. The court said that the Animal Welfare Act clearly establishes the Department of Agriculture (in consultation with NIH) as the exclusive mechanism for handling alleged violations.

The court also came down strongly on the side of research, noting that accepting PETA's case could set a precedent for a spate of similar lawsuits. "To risk consequences of this magnitude in the absence of clear directions from the Congress would be ill-advised," said the court. "In fact, we are persuaded that the Congress intended that the independence of medical research be respected and that administrative enforcement govern the Animal Welfare Act."

PETA intends to press for a rehearing and has said it will try to take the case to the Supreme Court. Verville says, however, that although the opinion is only binding in the fourth circuit, it is comprehensive in scope and is likely to be "very persuasive" to state as well as other federal courts. ■

CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Senate Committee Boosts NSF's Budget Prospects

A Senate appropriations subcommittee has voted to add \$10 million to the President's \$1685.7-billion budget request for the National Science Foundation for fiscal year 1987. The move has improved the foundation's budgetary outlook, for it could help to offset a cut of \$135.7 million approved last month by the House. A final compromise between the House and Senate figures will probably not be reached until FY 1987 begins, however. NSF's budget, like that of the rest of the federal government, will be incorporated in a massive continuing resolution that is likely to become caught in a political tussle.

Congress must pass a continuing resolution by midnight on 30 September, when FY 1986 ends. But White House officials predict that the President will veto the funding bill the first time around because of cuts in defense spending and excess spending in other areas. With November elections approaching, members are likely to cut a deal quickly so they can leave town by mid-October. ■ MARK CRAWFORD