Funds Voted for NSF, NASA

After allowing only for inflation in the current year, Congress has appropriated a funding increase for the National Science Foundation's core research account that could provide for some growth in programs next year. This 8.9% rise is close to the 10% hike requested in January by the Administration and will bring overall spending for research and related activities to $1.58 billion. How this increase will be shared among existing programs is not certain.

To a limited extent, distribution of this money will depend on how NSF Director Erich Bloch decides to implement his proposed science and technology centers program. These specialized science centers will support multi-investigator basic research.

While rejecting the Administration's request for a special $150-million, 5-year appropriation, the House and Senate have said that NSF may proceed with a small number of centers. These centers will be funded out of the regular research budget.

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee authorized $20 million for the program for 1989. But some legislators worry about how the new science centers will affect other program budgets. In particular, they are concerned about lower growth in funding for individual investigators, existing agency supercomputer centers, and the engineering research centers, which focus on design and engineering research related to manufacturing.

The House Appropriations Committee expects NSF to report on its plans sometime next month. Bloch is looking at options for spending $15 million to $30 million in 1989 on the science and technology centers, according to NSF officials. The agency is set to identify this fall which of the 48 active proposals will be first to receive funding.

For all NSF activities, the total congressional appropriation comes to $1.88 billion—most of which goes for the agency's research account. The 9.4% increase allowed the agency is less than the 19% jump that the Administration had proposed. Besides the research program, it includes $171 million for science education and $131 million for the agency's Antarctic research program. Congress also stipulated that no more than $95,000 of any NSF grant can go for an investigator's salary.

■ **National Aeronautics and Space Administration.** As part of the same funding package, the House and Senate agreed to provide $10.7 billion for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Funding for the agency's research and development program will increase from $3.3 billion to $4.2 billion.

Much of the increase in the research budget, however, goes to the space station. Spending for this project is slated to rise from $392 million this year to $900 million in 1989. Of this, $515 million will become available to the agency in May 1989, unless the next president notifies Congress by 1 February that he opposes the program.

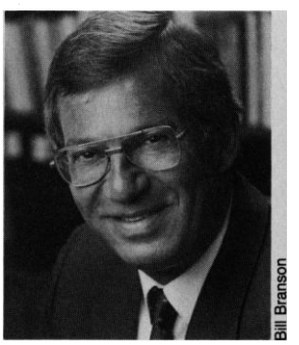
NASA's budget for space shuttle orbiter operations and space flight communications is set at $4.36 billion. This budget could be augmented by another $100 million in Department of Defense funds. The availability of these funds will depend on how Congress acts on the appropriations bill for DOD.

■ MARK CRAWFORD

DeVita is Leaving Cancer Institute for Sloan-Kettering

Vincent T. DeVita, Jr., director of the National Cancer Institute since 1980, has resigned to become physician-in-chief of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. DeVita, who has been at the cancer institute since the early 1960s, has overseen the tremendous expansion of NCI that followed passage of the "war on cancer" during the Nixon Administration and saw the NCI budget grow to $1.5 billion.

At Sloan-Kettering, DeVita will succeed radiologist Samuel Hellman who has become dean of medicine at the University of Chicago. DeVita, regarded as a tough manager and administrator, is also known for his pioneering clinical studies with chemotherapy, particularly in using drugs to control Hodgkin's disease. With Hellman and NCI surgeon Steven A. Rosenberg, he is author of a major medical textbook on cancer.



Bill Branson

Vincent T. DeVita

DeVita decided to leave NCI after so many years not because of dissatisfaction with the institute but because of the challenge of returning to a more clinical role at one of the country's most notable cancer centers. In the process he will at least triple his government salary of about $90,000.

■ B.J.C.

Decision on Gene Test Deferred

Calling for additional data, a key NIH committee has deferred a decision on a proposed experiment that would put genetically engineered cells into human beings for the first time.

The experiment, by W. French Anderson, Steven A. Rosenberg, R. Michael Blaese, and their colleagues at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), would insert a marker gene into special cancer-fighting white blood cells, and then put those cells back into the body, to monitor the progress of an experimental cancer therapy (*Science*, 22 July, p. 419). The foreign gene itself would not have a therapeutic effect, but would enable researchers to study why it works in some patients but not others.

Rosenberg has been treating patients with melanoma, and patients with kidney cancer, with a combination of tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes or TIL cells and interleukin-2. So far, 25 patients with terminal disease that has not responded to any other form of therapy have been treated, but there has been tumor regression in only about half.

The Anderson-Rosenberg proposal passed the first hurdle, approval by the NIH Institutional Biosafety Committee, on 13 July. But on 29 July the Human Gene Therapy Subcommittee of the NIH Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee, or RAC, said that they wanted to see data from experiments in another animal model before making a decision. So far, the research team has tested the procedure in mice by inserting the marker gene into T cells, a type of white blood cell. The human gene test, however, will be performed in TIL cells.

The new mouse experiments are not expected to reveal any surprises. Rather, the question is a procedural one: the subcommittee felt that, for the first trial of gene therapy in humans, the additional research should be done.

That work is now under way. If completed in time, the subcommittee will review the results and rule on the experiment in September. Either way, the proposal goes to the full RAC committee, on which many of the subcommittee members serve, on 3 October.

■ LESLIE ROBERTS