

Superpay for NIH Superstars

It has been a long time since the National Institutes of Health has been able to recruit superstar scientists from the country's major universities or industries. Federal pay caps prevent NIH from offering competitive salaries and most researchers are in no position to take a significant cut. (One of the rare exceptions in the last decade is NIH director James B. Wyngaarden, who came to NIH 7 years ago from the chairmanship of medicine at Duke.)

Now Congress and the Administration are thinking about creating a private NIH foundation to enable NIH to pay at least a handful of scholars at the going rate. Preliminary plans for the foundation roughly follow a suggestion made last year by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in its study of ways to keep NIH's Bethesda campus intel-

lectually healthy.* "What we need," New York financier Benno C. Schmidt said a year ago, "is an ingenious formula for attracting private money to NIH for endowed chairs and professorships."

A draft proposal prepared by the staff of Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts would do just that. In round numbers, a senior M.D. researcher at NIH cannot make much more than \$100,000. As department chairman at a major medical school, one could expect a salary twice that. A private NIH foundation would make it possible for NIH to get into the competitive game, perhaps with ten endowed chairs to start off. Various possibilities have been suggested for choosing them—perhaps one to an institute, perhaps one for each of ten scientific areas in which NIH needs to develop or maintain special strength.

Money could come from industry, private philanthropies, and from Congress itself in

*"A Healthy NIH Intramural Program" (Institute of Medicine, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 20418, 1988).

the form of a special contribution similar to that given to the Henry Jackson Foundation at the military medical school just across the street from NIH, where a handful of researchers hold special chairs.

Princeton University president Harold T. Shapiro, who chaired the IOM study, has met with Kennedy staff members, as well as officials at the White House Office of Management and Budget about the foundation—an idea that came, in part, as a response to a trial balloon from OMB to turn all of NIH into a private university. That idea was roundly rejected by the IOM and the biomedical research community at large (*Science*, 18 March 1988, p. 1364).

For more than a generation, NIH has thrived by training its own young researchers for top positions, but as a result of its very success in building a strong biomedical enterprise nationwide, NIH has also created competition for talent out there in the universities. The challenge is to find a way to make NIH competitive again.

■ BARBARA J. CULLITON

Fraud and the "Glare of the TV Camera"

Fraud and misconduct in science troubles not just Congress, it seems, but also the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

On 17 May, HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan spoke at the dedication of the Rockefeller Research Laboratories at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. But in addition to the usual encomiums, he delivered some sobering thoughts to the hundreds of assembled guests, among them the best and brightest in cancer research.

"We are shocked by reports of scientific fraud," Sullivan said. To regain public trust in science, we must "rid ourselves of those who practice deception and fraud."

Sullivan reminded the audience that the advancement of knowledge "has always been governed by two standards, that of the scientific community and that of the lay public. The historic tapestry of scientific discovery is woven throughout with the expansion and restriction of the tension inherent between these two standards."

The communications revolution has changed that tension, Sullivan said. "There was a time when scientific discoveries were quietly discussed in the journals of technical societies, the conference rooms, and the laboratories of researchers;

when the medical symposium was attended by only those specialists whose discipline was to be discussed. The techniques and findings of research were largely the quiet preserve of the scientific community. That day is . . . gone forever.

"That which was once performed in the remote ivory tower of academia is now submitted to the glare of the television camera, the business investor, and the venture capitalist. The minute steps, the intricate minuet of scientific discovery, the start and stops of trial and error of molecular modeling in our powerful computers are now reported instantly. The hopes and anticipation of the public soar to the heights or are dashed to the ground with the evening news."

Biomedical science has given the public enormous benefits over the years, Sullivan said, but "when the frontiers of research lead us to the edges of public acceptance and understanding, tension results."

The public should know "what we are doing, why we are doing it, how we are doing it, and how much we think it will cost," Sullivan said. ■ GREGORY BYRNE



Louis Sullivan

Hughes Makes Awards to University Science

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute, which pledged to support undergraduate science education, is moving steadily in that direction. Last week, Hughes president Purnell W. Choppin announced \$61 million in awards to science departments at 51 universities.

A year ago, Hughes gave grants totaling \$30 million to 34 liberal arts colleges (with no graduate schools) and 10 historically black colleges.

The 5-year Hughes grants, which range from \$1 million to \$2 million each, are small in comparison to its multimillion awards to major research programs, but substantial in terms of the budget of an undergraduate science department. The goal is to find ways to attract more undergraduates to science. Between the 10th and 12th grades, the number of students taking science falls 50%, Hughes vice president Joseph G. Perpich points out. Then, in college there is another 50% fallout in the numbers as students who start out as science majors change directions. One way is to turn this around, Perpich believes, is to change the courses students take, adding that the institute was "very much impressed" with ideas the departments had for restructuring their science curricula to include more hands-on learning, and for "outreach" programs including summer programs and weekend seminars.

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