

## Baltimore to Succeed Lederberg?

Nobel laureate Joshua Lederberg (1958) is set to retire as president of Rockefeller University in January. Nobel laureate David Baltimore (1975) is a prime candidate for the job.

But a potent combination of academic and national politics threatens the succession.

As word of Baltimore's likely appointment spread through the academic world last week, the faculty at Rockefeller began voicing objections on two counts: first, that their own faculty search committee had not been fully consulted by the university trustees, with whom the presidential decision ultimately rests. In fact, members of the faculty committee themselves learned from the rumor mill that the trustees were planning to select Baltimore for the job.

The faculty's second concern is that Baltimore's much publicized run-in with Congressman John Dingell (D-MI) over allegations of fraud in research make him a potential liability to Rockefeller even though the allegations have yet to be proved.

Rockefeller trustees, headed by William O. Baker, retired chairman of the board of Bell labs, are well aware of the publicity Baltimore has received as a result of charges that data in a paper he coauthored do not support the paper's conclusions. (Baltimore, himself, has not been accused of misconduct but, as the paper's most prominent author, he has taken it upon himself to defend the research.) In a telephone interview with *Science*, Baker declined to comment on Baltimore as a candidate for the Rockefeller presidency, but he did say that he and other trustees firmly believe that it is wrong to disqualify any person who has had a long and distinguished career just because of one messy incident.

The search for a successor to Lederberg, who faces mandatory retirement as he reaches his 65th birthday, has been conducted by the trustees and by a faculty search committee headed by Nobel laureate Torsten Wiesel (1981). Members of each group privately confirm that the two have not worked together as collaboratively as some would have liked, leaving the small Rockefeller faculty feeling underrepresented.

Things might not have grown so tense had the man who apparently was at the top of the list said "Yes." But Nobel laureate Joseph Goldstein (1985), who is still very active in the lab at the University of Texas at Dallas, was not ready to give up his work on the molecular genetics of blood lipids.

Baltimore, director of the Whitehead Institute at Massachusetts Institute of Tech-

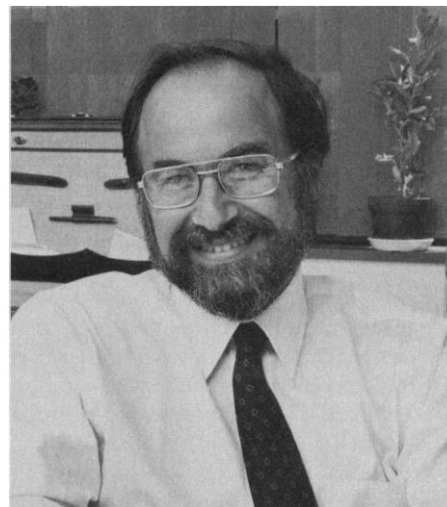
nology, shared the Nobel with Howard M. Temin for his discovery of the enzyme reverse transcriptase, a vital chemical in the biotechnology revolution. His scientific stature is enhanced by his demonstrated ability to build a strong research institution. The Whitehead, which began in 1984 with \$100 million from entrepreneur Edwin C. (Jack) Whitehead, is now one of the country's leading centers for molecular biology.

But Baltimore's credentials are inevitably colored by his encounter with Congress. And the fact that the case remains unresolved nearly 4 years after allegations were first raised doesn't make things any better.

Thus far, the charges, which involve possible data mishandling by Thereza Imanishi-Kari of Tufts University, have been looked into by two faculty committees, an NIH panel, Dingell's staff, and, at Dingell's request, the U.S. Secret Service (*Science*, 12 May, p. 643).

At congressional hearings before Dingell last spring, James B. Wyngaarden, then director of the National Institutes of Health, promised that the NIH, having conducted one investigation of the paper Baltimore coauthored with Imanishi-Kari, would conduct a second, definitive "full audit" of every piece of data NIH and Dingell committee investigators can get their hands on.

That was in May. There was a sense of urgency about it. But now, 5 months later, the best information *Science* can get from



**Baltimore:** Left in limbo by NIH.

NIH's "fraud" office is that no one is sure when the audit, which has not begun, will be complete. The original NIH review was conducted by a three-member panel of expert immunologists. Will those three participate in the NIH's full audit? "As far as I know," said an NIH official. After Wyngaarden's May commitment to Dingell to do a full audit, there was talk of naming a couple more people to the NIH panel. Have they been named? NIH is still "working on it."

Meanwhile, the case remains in limbo.

A Whitehead Institute spokesman says only that "Dr. Baltimore has been approached by Rockefeller and other institutions, but nothing has been decided."

As *Science* goes to press, the trustees have not formally offered the Rockefeller presidency to anyone.

■ BARBARA J. CULLITON

## Deficit Woes Cloud Research Funding

With no appropriations bills approved, and the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings fiscal chain-saw bearing down, federal research agencies are entering the new fiscal year in a state of budgetary uncertainty. Fiscal year 1990 officially begins on 1 October, but as *Science* went to press, not a single spending bill had been signed into law. Worse yet, unless Congress can find a way to cover a projected \$16-billion budget overrun, automatic, across-the-board cuts will have to be imposed. University researchers and government scientists who have been counting on increased federal funding therefore may have to put their plans on ice for a while.

Budgets for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) are still grinding their way through Congress. The only appropriations bill to emerge so far is the one covering DOE; it is currently await-

ing the President's signature. Here is a rundown of congressional action so far on key agency budgets.

■ Appropriations bills approved separately by the House and Senate would boost NIH's budget for competitive, extramural research project grants (excluding AIDS) to \$4 billion, up from \$3.8 billion in 1989. But outlays for new competitive research grants may decline slightly from \$995 million to \$973 million. The AIDS research program would get the lion's share of NIH's overall budget increase, climbing from \$604 million to \$750 million. These figures could be affected slightly when differences in the House appropriation of \$7.680 billion for the total NIH budget is reconciled with the Senate appropriation of \$7.713 billion.

■ The House has approved a budget bill for NSF, and a companion measure is wending its way through the Senate. NSF's overall budget is expected to come in at about