

Briefings

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Bick Replacement Named

John W. Diggs has been named deputy director for extramural research and training at the National Institutes of Health. He replaces Katherine Bick, who is best remembered



John W. Diggs

for her involvement in early NIH attempts at defining conflict-of-interest rules for grantees.

Diggs will have nothing to do with scientific misconduct now that the Public Health Service has two offices devoted to the matter. In addition to policy guidance, he will be concerned with human subject protection and animal welfare issues.

A Howard University-educated physiologist, Diggs has been director of extramural activities at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases since 1982.

Yet Another Job For Wyngaarden

Barely installed at the National Academy of Sciences, James Wyngaarden now has still another new assignment: a one third-time post as director of the Human Genome Organisation (HUGO), which coordinates international efforts to map and sequence the human genome. This is in addition to his half-time job as NAS foreign secretary and his part-time position as an adviser to Ralph Snyderman, chancellor for health affairs at Duke Univer-

sity Medical Center. These latter posts came on the heels of his brief stint in the Office of Science and Technology Policy, which followed his resignation last August as director of the National Institutes of Health.

As director of HUGO, a newly created job, Wyngaarden's chief task appears to be to give some direction to the organization, which has been floundering since it was created 2 years ago. HUGO has a prestigious 18-member council and a distinguished president, Walter Bodmer, director of research at the Imperial Cancer Research Fund in London. But as Wyngaarden puts it, these are busy men, with full-time jobs.

As HUGO's most visible spokesman, Wyngaarden will coordinate the activities of the two regional offices in Bethesda, Maryland, and London. The organization has already decided on at least one major initiative: a series of chromosome workshops to coordinate the physical mapping efforts on various chromosomes.

Wyngaarden says he is giving the job 3 years—time enough “to see whether we can raise money and launch HUGO successfully.”

Chinese Still Coming

Despite widespread beliefs to the contrary, more Chinese scientists than ever have been coming to the United States for work and study since the June 1989 crackdown in Tienanmen Square.

So reports Washington, D.C., consultant and China expert Leo Orleans, author of a book on Chinese students in America published by the National Academy of Sciences. Orleans says the Chinese “never really implemented” last February's announcement that scholars could go abroad only after 2 to 5 years of work in China.

Orleans says that according to figures from the Chinese, the numbers of citizens given J-1 visas (for government-sponsored scholars) in 1989 was

1446, up from 1159 in 1988. What's more, 63% came post-Tienanmen.

Even more striking has been the increase in F-1 visas, issued to people with family and friends to sponsor them in the United States. The 1988 figure of 4771 leapt to 7386 in 1989, three-fourths of whom came after Tienanmen.

Orleans says that after Tienanmen, “the Chinese government said there would be no changes but no one believed them.” What has actually happened, he says, is that it is now more difficult for undergraduates and predoctoral students to get visas, so incoming Chinese are mostly older scholars.

According to Library of Congress China expert Wang Chi, there are no current figures on how many Chinese are staying permanently in the United States, but past statistics indicate that fewer than 10% will opt to return. But the country is unwilling to stem the outflow—“even if 10% go back, that's better than no percent,” says Wang.

Doing Science at the Gates of Hell

Care in conducting science has taken on a new meaning for geologists and geophysicists studying the burnt-out remains of the century's largest volcanic eruption. No, we're not talking about the careful keeping of notebooks; we're talking about banana peels. In the harsh but pristine wasteland of Alaska's Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, researchers have been on their best behavior, flying out by helicopter everything from gum wrappers to human wastes, and even raking away their footprints on departure. Their goal? Sounds like an oilman's dream: to drill in a National Park's wilderness area.

These scientists aren't after oil; they want to pierce the buried volcanic throat that in 1912's Katmai eruption spewed 30 times the ash of Mount St. Helens' 1980 eruption. Led by John Eichelberger of Sandia National Laboratories under the U.S. Continental Scientific Drilling Program, expeditions last summer and this have probed the subsurface with remote-sensing instruments. But two drill holes as deep as 1.2

kilometers will be needed to detail the eruption's behavior. Drilling will require an Environmental Impact Statement, which is why the scientists have been behaving like such exemplary campers.

So far, the environment has had far more impact on the scientists than vice versa. During last August's field season, temperatures dipped into the forties, winds reached 100 miles per hour, and rain-fed flooding threatened the tent encampment. But the bureaucracy has been kinder. The National Academy of Sciences has certified that the Katmai site is uniquely suited to scientific drilling, and the National Park Service has been impressed with the low impact of the fieldwork. Oil drillers, take note.



A pristine drill site. The dome-plugged volcanic throat of Novarupta in Katmai National Park (middle distance) is the target of scientific drilling.

J.C. Eichelberger