

tions: The agencies suggest such options as public disclosure, monitoring research with independent reviewers, modifying the research plan, divestiture, and severing a researcher's relationship with the company.

Both NIH and NSF plan to conduct a few random audits each year to keep institutions honest. They also expect tips from whistleblowers to trigger a few more inspections.

Despite an attempt to harmonize the two agencies' regulations, a few differences remain. NSF, for example, exempts researchers at institutions with fewer than 50 employees. "We didn't want to place undue burden on our smaller grantees," says assistant general counsel Micki Leder. But the PHS proposed regulation states that "our experience...indicates that investigators working for small entities may be just as subject to conflict of interest as [those] working for large institutions." PHS has solicited comment on the point, and Leder says that NSF may consider changing its rule if the responses suggest that the 50-person threshold is a mistake.

Likewise, the two agencies disagree on what to do about Small Business Innovation

Research (SBIR) grants. This program, imposed by Congress, requires that agencies spend 1.5% of their overall research budget on research and development projects submitted by small businesses. Because a researcher applying for an SBIR grant is assumed to have a financial interest in the company, a conflict of sorts is implicit and there is no need to disclose it, says Leder. PHS, on the other hand, would exempt those who submit SBIR grants only for the first, 6-month phase, a period intended to plan and determine the feasibility of the idea. Once the company applies for a larger, Phase II SBIR grant to actually do the work, its researchers would have to comply with the same regulations as other PHS-funded institutions.

The generally positive response within the research community to the regulations doesn't mean they can't be improved. Research administrators say there's enough they'd like to tinker with to provide PHS with a healthy crop of comments to chew over this summer. PHS is also seeking comments on what to do about issues not specifically covered in its proposal, from insti-

tutional conflicts of interest to financial holdings by scientists in companies that compete with products involved in a research application.

David Blake, executive vice dean and vice dean for research at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, is likely to be one such correspondent. Although he's generally pleased with the rules, he thinks researchers should not have to disclose all their financial holdings above the stated threshold; those related to their research should be enough, he argues. "If the faculty aren't able to identify the conflicts in their own research, then the whole system is in trouble," he says, adding that unnecessary and intrusive rules tend to breed noncompliance.

But compared to 1989, when Blake was among those objecting the most loudly to the proposal, such concerns are secondary. "We can fundamentally live with it," he says, adding that reasonable rules should make it easier for institutions to craft common policies for compliance. As they say, time heals all wounds.

—Christopher Anderson

1995 BUDGET

Station's Survival Could Cramp Science

Last week, what promised to be a tough congressional fight over the fate of the space station turned into a rout: Supporters in the House of Representatives clobbered an amendment to kill the project, 278 to 155. But the station's good fortune could come back to haunt science, which has so far been trimmed but not badly cut by Congress. The Senate, which has traditionally been an even stronger supporter of the station than the House, allocated some \$300 million less to the subcommittee that handles the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) budget, which means the subcommittee may end up cutting research programs at NASA, the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Environmental Protection Agency to pay for the station.

Congressional aides credited the space station victory to an all-out lobbying effort by the Administration, led by Vice President Al Gore and NASA administrator Daniel Goldin. They stressed the foreign policy advantages of NASA's collaboration with Russia on the project, arguing that employing Russian space scientists keeps them out of the clutches of current or potential nuclear powers such as India, Iraq, and North Korea.

Station supporters were also blessed with a misguided attempt to kill the project. In an effort to gain the support of scientific groups, Representatives Tim Roemer (D-IN) and Dick Zimmer (R-NJ) proposed returning the \$2.1 billion requested for the station to NASA, rather than using it for deficit reduc-

tion. But the move backfired. Budget hawks didn't want to spend the money at all, and scientific groups, unlike in past years, refused to criticize the station.

The debate now moves to the Senate, which is expected to take up the NASA budget this month. Although the station is considered relatively safe there, the smaller Senate budget allocation could spell trouble for NSF, which is funded by the same appropriations bill. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), chair of the subcommittee that oversees that bill, will be hard-pressed to match what the House did last month: a 2.5% increase for research (\$53 million more instead of a requested boost of \$185 million) and 3% for education (matching the \$17-million requested increase).

Other research agencies are not in such direct competition with the station, because they are handled by different appropriations subcommittees. But they are nevertheless getting squeezed. The National Institutes of Health (NIH), for example, can look forward to an increase of about 3.5% if the Senate follows the House's lead. Last week the House passed a bill that would raise funding for NIH from \$10.9 billion in 1994 to \$11.32 billion in 1995—\$150 million short of the President's request.

For high-energy physicists, the Senate's action last week on the Department of Energy's (DOE's) budget contains mixed news. The Senate killed construction funds for the proposed \$3-billion Advanced Neu-

tron Source (ANS) at Argonne National Laboratory, citing an uncertain cost and concern that the design is "not mature." This, along with a House decision to delete all but \$10 million for ANS construction, could delay the project for at least a year.

The situation is even more muddled for the proposed Tokamak Physics Experiment (TPX) at the Princeton (New Jersey) Plasma Physics laboratory. Senator Bennett Johnston (D-LA), chair of the energy appropriations subcommittee, wants a federal commitment on the proposed International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) before he will support TPX. Although he agreed to an amendment from the New Jersey delegation to reinstate \$45 million in construction money, the deal is contingent on passage of an authorization bill proclaiming the nation's commitment to ITER. Such a bill has already passed the Senate, but a much different version is before the House.

The biggest research-related winner so far is the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Its Advanced Technology Program received \$232 million of its \$252-million request in the House, bringing the program to \$431 million. The Defense Department's \$243-billion budget, passed in 15 minutes before the House recessed for the July 4th holiday, retains a \$900-million cut in funding of university research (*Science*, 1 July, p. 23), but the lack of debate on the normally contentious bill is seen as a sign that the cuts will be restored in the final bill.

—Christopher Anderson,
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