no way to prevent this. "The only way we could see to leaven what would otherwise be unfounded conclusions ... was to emphasize the ephemeral character of reputational surveys by providing some 19 other variables by which a program could be judged," Goldberger says. NRC panel members say the fine distinctions are less significant than the broad groupings of quality—top, middle, and bottom—into which the programs fall.

As for fairness, Goldberger continues, "there's no question that there was an 'inverse halo effect' " diminishing small schools' rankings. But the committee had to respect raters' assertions that they were sufficiently familiar with a program to evaluate it fairly. While mistakes—often the fault of sloppy paperwork by university administrators, Goldberger says—did crop up, they were few and far between.

PHYSICS TOP 10

School	Quality of Faculty*	Total Citations for Faculty(†)	Changes in Program Quality**	Total Faculty
1. Harvard University	4.91	5,463 (5)	–0.03	32
2. Princeton University	4.89	5,170 (7)	0.23	47
3. (tie) MIT	4.87	10,057 (1)	0.06	83
3. (tie) UC Berkeley	4.87	5,676 (4)	–0.03	67
5. California Institute of Technology	4.81	3,759 (10)	–0.03	39
6. Cornell University	4.75	3,368 (15)	–0.02	54
7. University of Chicago	4.69	8,443 (17)	0.19	40
8. U. of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	4.66	1,844 (2)	0.02	98
9. Stanford University	4.53	8,015 (41)	0.04	25
10. U. of California, Santa Barbara	4.43	5,132 (3)	0.60	45

*(0–5; 5 is top score) **over last 5 years (–1 = poorer; +1 = better) †Overall citation rank.

SOURCE: NAS

Goldberger also admits that data on career outcomes of program graduates would have been very valuable, but "we simply didn't have the resources to pursue that." Berkeley's Cerny is leading a $75,000 pilot study to determine how easily graduates in five fields surveyed in the 1982 study can be located today, with the hope of including career data in the next, as-yet-unscheduled NRC report.

How much help the current report will be to the consumers of graduate education—students themselves—remains to be seen. When deciding which programs are best for them, most students pay closer attention to individual faculty interests and publications than to survey data, says Paul Baum, a doctoral candidate in genetics at Berkeley. That thought may be solace to the faculty at the state-funded University of Southern Mississippi, which finished 179th out of 179 programs in cell and developmental biology and 140th out of 140 in physiology—at least until the rankings reach the capitol in Jackson.

–Wade Roush

NIH FUNDING

The Price of Compromise

The threat of a deadlock in Congress over the bill that funds biomedical research eased a bit last week when a key Senate committee took a step toward the Clinton Administration and away from the conservative line adopted by the House in July. The change occurred on 15 September, when the Senate Appropriations Committee approved HR 2127, a bill that finances the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education. Next stop for the bill will be the floor of the Senate, later this month.

The Senate panel voted to restore cuts made by House conservatives in programs championed by the president and moderate Republicans—including education grants, worker safety provisions, and subsidies for home heating. The Senate panel also stripped out 17 controversial amendments added by the House, covering such topics as abortion and embryo research. The White House had said that these detailed social policy clauses—along with cuts in social programs—would guarantee a presidential veto.

PROPOSED NIH FUNDING FY 1996 ($ billions)

	1995 Appropriation	Administration Request	House Bill	Senate Bill
Amount	11.297	11.764	11.939	11.598
Increase over 1995		+4.1%	+5.7%	+2.7%

For biomedical researchers, however, the Senate panel's compromise came with a price: Restoring the funds for the other programs would mean a smaller budget for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) than either the House or the Administration wanted. The House had proposed a 5.7% raise in NIH's budget and the White House a boost of 4.1%. But under the Senate plan, it would rise from $11.297 billion to $11.598 billion in 1996, a boost of only 2.7%. The $301 million increase would be spread thinly among NIH's 24 institutes and divisions. At the same time, the Senate committee is asking NIH to trim $41.7 million across the board from administrative expenses by streamlining and consolidating offices.

Led by Senators Mark Hatfield (R–OR) and Arlen Specter (R–PA)—chair of the full appropriations committee and Labor-HHS subcommittee—members agreed to skirt the emotional topics that had slowed action in the House. Congress is facing a backlog of spending bills, Hatfield explained, all of them due to be finished before the fiscal year ends on 30 September. He and Specter persuaded their colleagues to hold back amendments until the bill reaches the Senate floor. Among the items Hatfield and Specter struck out are:

- A ban on human embryo research and the creation of embryos for research.
- A $7.5 million funding "earmark" for the Office of Alternative Medicine at NIH.
- A section allowing states to refuse to fund abortions "to the extent that the state in its sole discretion deems appropriate," except when the mother's life is in danger.
- A requirement that funding not be denied to medical institutions that refuse to provide training in induced abortions.
- Detailed guidelines on the length of time a woman should stay in the hospital after delivering a child.
- A ban on "political advocacy" by federal grantees.

The Senate committee also decided to keep a special funding category created 2 years ago to give prominence to AIDS research at NIH. The House, in a move that upset AIDS activists, threatened to do away with all "earmarking" of AIDS money within the NIH budget, although it would have retained the advisory role of the Office of AIDS Research (*Science*, 21 July, p. 292).

Many, if not all, of these proposals will reappear later—either when the bill reaches the floor of the Senate or when it goes to conference in the House. As a result, Hatfield foresees a long, arduous, and unpredictable battle this fall over the bill's final wording. In the end, he thinks, this bill may well be vetoed by the president in spite of the committee's efforts.

–Eliot Marshall