

University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia (where he still keeps his home) in July 1998 by Harold Varmus, then director of NIH. Nathanson had little AIDS experience, but he threw himself into the job with the enthusiasm of a graduate student. "Part of the reason he was able to accomplish the things he did is because he was not an insider," says Philip Greenberg of the University of Washington, Seattle, an HIV immunologist who sits on the OAR council. "He had no vested interests, and he didn't have a career to extend."

Greenberg and others credit Nathanson with fostering cooperation among NIH institutes, boosting the AIDS vaccine research budget, better coordinating primate research, and rescuing an endangered HIV-specific "study section" that reviews outside grant applications. Nathanson says dealing with the tensions among the various institutes presented him the greatest challenge of all. "The institute directors are much too powerful, and the NIH director is much too weak," Nathanson says. "The institutes do not play well together. And I've done a lot of behind-the-scenes negotiations."

Nathanson plans to return to the University of Pennsylvania, and he's interested in working in the AIDS vaccine area, at Penn or elsewhere. "Who knows what will come along?" he says. NIH has not yet formed a search committee to find his replacement. "It's going to be tough filling his shoes, I'll tell you," says Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. —JON COHEN

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Jury Awards \$545,000 In Stanford Case

A federal jury last week ordered Stanford University to pay \$545,000 to a former medical informatics researcher who was laid off 3 years ago after alleging sex discrimination on the job. The researcher is also one of several women whose complaints have triggered an ongoing Department of Labor investigation into the university's affirmative action policies.

Yesterday's decision involves Colleen Crangle, a computer sciences expert who worked in the department of medicine at Stanford's medical school. In a suit filed in U.S. District Court in October 1997, Crangle alleged that she was let go in March 1997 with one day's notice because she complained about the way she was being treated by male colleagues—specifically, about a set of restrictions imposed on

her activities as a researcher. The jury ruled that Stanford had acted "with malice" toward Crangle, a part-time senior research scientist who did not hold a formal faculty position and who worked on a series of projects.

The verdict does not address directly the issue of sex discrimination. Judge James Ware threw out a discrimination claim in Crangle's suit in a summary judgment last fall. But the basis for the jury's awarding her damages is its finding that Crangle had a valid reason to feel discriminated against, and the larger issue is clearly on the minds of both parties. "I think [the verdict] sends a real message to Stanford that they can't overlook these cases," says Dan Siegel, Crangle's lawyer. Despite persistent complaints, he says, "Stanford really has turned a blind eye" toward allegations of sex discrimination.

Debra Zumwalt, Stanford's acting general counsel, disagrees that the university has ignored the issue or acted improperly. An internal review, she says, found that salaries and tenure rates for women faculty members are on par with those for men. "It's very frustrating that there is a vocal minority who give the impression that there is a persistent problem," she says. During the trial, Stanford's lawyers argued that Crangle's superiors went out of their way to help find her work when money ran out on the project she was working on. "Crangle's position was explicitly made contingent upon continued outside funding, and that funding ran out," says Zumwalt. "Obviously, we are disappointed with the jury's verdict" and plan to appeal the case, she adds.

One of the strongest pieces of evidence introduced to buttress Crangle's case, says Siegel, was a series of e-mails. In one, written in December 1996, Medical Informatics director Mark Musen discusses Crangle's complaints with Edward Shortliffe, the associate medical school dean, and then states, "I'd like to see what options we have right now simply to lay her off."

In its unanimous verdict, the eight-member jury awarded the maximum amount

allowed under federal law in such cases. Crangle sees the verdict as vindication of her complaint that, despite her qualifications, she was required to serve as a "girl Friday" to male colleagues. At the same time, Crangle says that if given the opportunity, she would reclaim her job. "I'm tired of seeing good women leave and be forced out," she says. "The only way it will change is if I, and people like me, stay and work

to make it better."

The verdict comes as the U.S. Department of Labor is investigating charges that the university has systematically violated rules involving the hiring and promoting of women employees. Because Stanford receives grants and contracts from the federal government, it is required to adhere to federal policies that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The complaints were brought by current and former Stanford employees—a group that numbered as many as 32 in February 1999. This winter the government provided Stanford with the names of nine women, Zumwalt says, including Crangle. University officials say they have nothing to hide: "We have zero tolerance for discrimination and retaliation, and [we have] strong policies that prohibit such behavior. And we enforce those policies," says Zumwalt.

—ROBERT F. SERVICE

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

UCSF Researchers Leave, Charging Bias

A prominent research couple has decided to leave the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), for tenured jobs at another UC school after accusing the university of sex discrimination. UCSF officials deny any bias or wrongdoing, and some scientists say the real problem is the vulnerability of adjunct faculty members—a problem that isn't confined to UCSF.

The departure this summer of Nelson Freimer, a key member of UCSF's human genetics program, and his wife, biomathematician Sally Blower, for UC Los Angeles will mark the end of a stormy 5-year relationship between Blower, an adjunct professor, and UCSF. Blower says that powerful male faculty members have humiliated her in a variety of ways, for example by forcing her to beg for permanent work space and shuttling her among departments and temporary space assignments. "If they think this is the correct way to treat women," says Blower, "I find it offensive. I don't want to be at this kind of institution."

Freimer, who joined the UCSF faculty in 1990 and whose work on isolating human disease genes has been integral to UCSF's new human genetics program, supports her claims. "My faith in the values of the institution has been repeatedly shaken by my witnessing Sally's treatment here over the past several years and has been utterly destroyed by her experiences over the past several months," he wrote in a letter to UCSF Chancellor J. Michael Bishop in early February. Blower has received a position as a full professor in the



Winner. Jury agrees that Stanford retaliated against Colleen Crangle.

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ScienceScope

department of biomathematics at UCLA, and Freimer will direct a new center for neurobehavioral genetics.

UCSF officials dispute Blower's allegations. In a statement on 23 March, Bishop said that a 1-month inquiry by a UCSF associate dean into Blower's allegations found "no evidence of institutional sexism, gender discrimination, sexual harassment or professional misconduct directed against Dr. Blower." But at least one administrator agrees that the status of women in medical schools in general needs improvement. "The quality of academic environment for women ... is not ideal in academic medical centers anywhere in this country," says Diane Wara, associate dean for minority and women's affairs at UCSF.

Blower, 42, completed a postdoc 10 years ago with Robert May at Oxford University, then worked at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health before taking a position as adjunct professor at UCSF in 1995. Over the past decade she has published a steady stream of articles in high-profile journals, including *Nature Medicine* and *Science*, modeling the transmission dynamics of infectious diseases. As a theoretician, Blower's space needs upon arriving at UCSF were modest: an office for herself and one for her postdocs. She had her own grant to pay salaries and research expenses, and she says she was not "looking for red-carpet treatment," but just wanted to be left "alone with a few postdocs [to] do some excellent research."

Instead, in an e-mail circulated in February to colleagues, she complains of mistreatment by a group of faculty members, whom she calls "the Senior Boys." The experience, she writes, left her feeling "powerless and voiceless" against "a vicious brutal sexist system, run by a bunch of bullies."

In a written response to questions from *Science*, the university said that Blower "was not repeatedly evicted from space. On the contrary, extraordinary efforts were made to accommodate her requests," including the offer of premium space at the Parnassus Heights campus and salary support when she was between grants. "Sally was not picked on uniquely," says Wara. "Space is precious here, and all of us have to be flexible."

Blower is neither suing UCSF nor filing a grievance. Her intention, she says, is to "shine the light ... on the status and treatment of women at UCSF." She says many female UCSF faculty members support her but have

remained silent "based on a fear of retaliation." But others vigorously deny that UCSF is a notably sexist place. "In the basic science departments at UCSF, I firmly believe there is about as little sex discrimination as anywhere in the world," says geneticist Cornelia Bargmann. "One of the reasons I came to UCSF was because I knew that was true. It was clear you could do well here."

Some attribute Blower's dissatisfaction to the fact that she has been a highly accomplished scientist serving in an adjunct position. And Bargmann notes that although her female tenure-track colleagues are thriving in the basic science departments at UCSF, the situation is very different for adjunct professors at most U.S. medical schools. "You look around and you see they are not treated well," she says about this group, often women, whose soft-money, non-tenure track positions give them little clout. "People feel that they are doing them a



Leaving. UCSF's Sally Blower seeks balmier academic climate at UCLA.

favor by giving them a position at all."

Wara acknowledges that assisting women in a historically male-dominated system and protecting the rights of adjunct faculty are more difficult than achieving such numerical goals as increasing the ranks of women faculty and providing pay equity. "We have tried for over a decade to put in place strategies to at least diminish the power differential" that female faculty members experience, she says, but "we still have a long way to go."

The university began an inquiry into the status of women before Blower made her charges. It is designed, according to a statement, to "research the issues and get beyond the numbers." A good place to start, say some researchers, may be the concerns of women in adjunct faculty positions.

—MARCIA BARINAGA

BIOMEDICINE

Hazel Trees Offer New Source of Cancer Drug

SAN FRANCISCO—Taxol is a potent and popular cancer drug, but it is harvested from the needles of an endangered tree, and demand for the drug could outpace the trees' productivity. Last week, researchers here at the American Chemical Society's semiannual meeting announced that they have isolated the compound from hazelnut trees and fungi, a finding that could lead to an abundant new source of the drug and possibly lower its cost.

Generically known as paclitaxel, Taxol is

Costly Benefit? An ounce of prevention may still be worth a pound of cure, but a new vaccine may cost Americans more than it saves them, according to a study published 15 March in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The recently approved vaccine Prevnar wards off seven strains of bacteria that cause ear infections, pneumonia, blood infections, and meningitis. Vaccinating infants could save more than \$750 million in medical expenses, missed work, and other costs, according to researchers at the Harvard Medical School in Boston. But the vaccine's cost will outweigh savings if it exceeds \$46 per shot, the researchers say. The vaccine's manufacturer, American Home Products of Madison, New Jersey, intends to charge \$58 per dose.

Prevnar may still be a good deal in spite of the bottom line, says pediatrician Tracy Lieu, lead author of the study. "It would prevent a lot of suffering," Lieu says, "and it's not easy to put a number on that benefit."

Ready to Rumble Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA, below), head of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the National Institutes of Health's (NIH's) budget, says he is ready for a "knock-down, drag-out battle" over legislation to endorse taxpayer funding of research on stem cells derived from human embryos. But at a hearing last week, NIH officials—who agree with Specter's position—fumbled a bit when their champion asked for some ready-for-prime-time sound bites he could use to press his case.



Last year, Specter and Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) inserted language into NIH's spending bill that would have clarified government support for the controversial research, but they agreed to withdraw it after antiabortion lawmakers threatened to stall the bill. In return, Specter got a promise from Republican leaders that he would get substantial time on the Senate floor this year to debate the issue.

With that clash possibly just weeks away, Specter asked NIH officials to remind listeners "why stem cells from embryos are so valuable." But after Gerald Fishbach, director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, produced two responses that were too unwieldy for political wordplay, a visibly agitated Specter took another tack. Could NIH leaders, he asked, take pen in hand, "sharpen up the answer, and provide it to me in writing?"