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The President's Message on Science and Technology

The nation's first presidential message on science and technology, which went to the Congress late last month, affirms many of the policies long advocated by the scientific community. For example, the President specifically stated that all federal departments and agencies will support basic research. He also called for stronger efforts to improve the scientific and technological basis for setting federal standards and regulations in antipollution efforts and public health. By virtue of presidential endorsement, such statements become national policies and constitute directives to the federal agencies.

The message is a landmark. It represents the foundations for a coherent science policy for the United States and clear-cut recognition that science policy is an integral part of our overall national policies. The message is therefore enormously important to those who comprise the nation's scientific and technological enterprise. It is backed by budget actions, among them a proposed 12 percent increase in university R & D support and a \$700-million increase in R & D related to domestic concerns such as energy, transportation, and environment.

The nation's new R & D thrusts point toward problem-solving on the domestic front as the fastest growing component of the fiscal 1973 budget (some 15 percent this year as opposed to a 9 percent growth in defense R & D). To power these thrusts, the President called for the creation of new partnerships among the various sectors of our society so that domestic R & D can be really effective. Cooperation between the federal government and universities is already well established. It must be augmented by cooperative arrangements with industry and local governments. These new elements are needed to crystallize the results of research for the benefit of society and to broaden the all-too-narrow base of university R & D support.

The message also proposed that the federal government stimulate private investment in R & D through cost sharing, patent licensing, encouraging research associations, and making venture capital more readily available to small, innovative companies. These federal catalysts, along with the forging of new partnerships, will give the R & D enterprise of the 70's a different look. We foresee a new synthesis of science and technology, one in which enhanced fundamental research will, as always, provide new potential for development, but where applied research and development will also stimulate and enhance fundamental work.

Also recognized in the message is the expanding role and need for international cooperative efforts. In addition to the traditional camaraderie of individual scientists, international problem-solving is seen as a new source of cooperation among nations, particularly in meeting environmental, health, and energy problems common to all. The President clearly intends that the United States shall take the initiative in many of these cooperative efforts.

Finally, the message is pro-science and pro-technology. It recognizes that search for knowledge and exploration of the unknown are fundamental human drives in the best traditions of American life. It states clearly that we as a society require more—rather than less—technology to improve both our standard of living and our quality of life. The President projects a bright future for science and technology, but his message challenges us to meet that future not only in the interests of our disciplines but also of our society and the world community.

—EDWARD E. DAVID, JR.