

by an amendment to the defense authorization bill last fall. It will be run by a board chaired by Bromley and composed of other Cabinet representatives and leaders from industry and academia. According to William Phillips, associate director of OSTP, this institute will have \$5 million to spend over the next 2 years as it prepares "road maps"—or investment strategies—for each technology identified in the April document.

These steps, bolder than any taken by the Reagan Administration, are still viewed by the technology activists on Capitol Hill as extremely modest. And now that Bromley's office and even the Office of Management and Budget have opened the gate just a crack, those who advocate stronger action are likely to pour in and clamor for more funds. They clearly are not satisfied with what has been appropriated to date.

Supporting a handful of regional technology centers and spending \$36 million to help industry develop pathbreaking ideas, says Julie Fox Gorte, chief author of a 1990 study by the congressional Office of Technology Assessment, is just a "spit in the ocean." Even if the Administration were to let these parts of the NIST budget grow to \$100 million, she says, this would merely amount to "a pittance" in the context of what other nations are doing. Japanese efforts to promote industry are much better funded, she says, and the Europeans are now gearing up to support "hundreds" of technology development efforts under two schemes known as ESPRIT and EUREKA.

Fox Gorte's views have plenty of supporters on Capitol Hill: Each year since the creation of NIST, Congress has tried to increase the budget rapidly and the Administration has put on the brakes. The pattern is likely to continue as the Administration is expected to keep NIST's policy experiments on a short leash until they have proved their value. Nevertheless, Congress will keep pushing. Last year, for example, the House Science Committee tried to increase funding for NIST's technology awards program, authorizing \$250 million for 1992. The bill didn't pass, but Representative Brown, the committee's chairman, recently promised to try again this year.

The negotiations have just begun on where and in what quantity to invest federal dollars, and they could well become a regular feature of the budget dance, like the biomedical funding waltz, in which the White House and Congress each year start at a distance and make their way to middle ground. But the important change in technology policy is that the Administration is no longer starting at zero. And that, according to the optimists, makes all the difference. ■ ELIOT MARSHALL

## Calmer Waters at Primate Institute?

Last fall New Mexico State University's (NMSU) unique primate research institute—one that could be crucial to the U.S. AIDS research effort—looked battered. It had lost its director and a new, prestigious AIDS research team in a falling out with the university administration. Suddenly endangered was an AIDS research resource of 100 chimpanzees, as many as one quarter of all the chimps available for AIDS research in the United States.

Six months later, prospects for the institute are either a whole lot brighter or still fraught with danger—depending on whom you listen to. To a group of researchers from the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control, the worst may be over. A team from those three organizations visited the institute late last year, prompted in part by an article in *Science*. After inspecting the facilities and being briefed by high-level NMSU officials, the group's head, John Donovan of the NCI, concluded in a special statement provided to *Science* that: "Considering the nature and extent of problems," a "formidable effort" was under way by the university administration and the institute's management to make the institute a "national research resource." But the team also agreed, said Donovan, that "the next 6 to 12 months would be a critical time period" for assessing the institute's "ability to progress to a stable and smoothly functioning organization."

Meanwhile, the stream of resignations at the institute has continued. In January, Dave Rehnquist, a former NCI veterinarian who was universally respected at the institute, left his position as head of veterinary services. In February, Ron Couch, a toxicologist with some \$1 million worth of research grants, resigned to work for White Sands Research Center, a private primate-research operation in Alamogordo. And in April, Brenda Billhymer and the rest of her eight-person clinical chemistry group, which provided support for the institute's contract research, will also move to White Sands.

The resignations aren't likely to help the institute's new director, Preston Marx. Marx came to the institute last summer from the University of California at Davis to replace former director Bill Hobson, who had hoped to make the primate facility into an AIDS basic research lab of national stature. It was Hobson who lured virologist Mika Popovic from Robert Gallo's lab at the National Cancer Institute, along with a bevy of top talent. When Hobson was abruptly dismissed in December 1989, Popovic, his research group, and most of the rest of the institute's total of 15 Ph.D.s left one by one.

In interviews with the local press, Marx has reiterated optimism concerning the institute, which he maintains has the potential to be a great research facility of the kind Hobson envisioned. Marx has been struggling to fill the institute's many vacancies and has been working with the university to clean up accounting procedures, which had been a bone of contention with Hobson. Sources say he was particularly cheered by the recent hiring of Andrew Lachner, a pathologist and former colleague from the California Primate Research Center at UC Davis.

Marx also changed the institute's name from the Primate Research Institute to the New Mexico Regional Primate Research Laboratory (NMRPRL), a move he told the Alamogordo *Daily News* reflected the lab's position as a statewide resource—and had nothing to do with the bad press the lab got under its previous title. Marx himself is in Sierra Leone and could not be reached for comment. But many independent observers credit him with prodigious labors. Will they be sufficient?

The NCI team isn't the only one interested in the answer. Last week an advisory council appointed by the university administration met to review the institute's research activities. The council, chaired by Leonard Napolitano, dean of medicine at the University of New Mexico, includes Dani Bolognesi of Duke University Medical Center, Ronald Desrosiers of the New England Regional Primate Research Center, and Bill Goodwin, deputy director of the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research.

Napolitano told *Science* the advisory body thought "significant progress had been made in stabilizing the program." The institute seems to be "on its way to establishing programs in immunology and virology." But on the key question of whether PRL will ever house the kind of basic AIDS research group Bill Hobson intended, Napolitano responds: "I really can't answer that now."

In any event, Marx's efforts won't lack for scrutiny. The advisory council has become a permanent fixture, and, according to Donovan's statement, the NCI team will visit PRL within the next 6 to 12 months "to evaluate their progress." ■ KAREN WRIGHT