

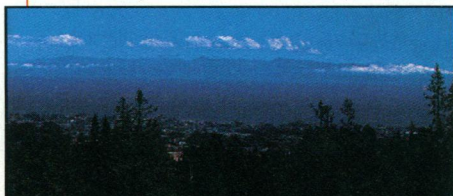
Going Head to Head With the Gordon Conference

■ The prestigious Gordon Conference—that exclusive summer session at which biologists meet in New Hampshire with top colleagues in an informal atmosphere, rough it in boarding-school dormitories, swat mosquitoes, and sweat in the summer humidity—will soon face some unanticipated competition. A group of West Coast scientists has decided to offer a similar meeting in Santa Cruz, where organizers boast of “No mosquitoes, low humidity,

75 degrees F, [and] college dorm apartments!”

Although they may face accusations of West Coast chauvinism, these scientists say they have long had to endure the East Coast equivalent. “Most of the existing science organizations are too East Coast-centric,” says Gerald Rubin, a geneticist at the University of California, Berkeley, and one of the organizers. Rubin also says he and his West Coast colleagues were tired of spending so much time on airplanes, and had come to believe that their students and postdocs were disadvantaged by the need to spend scarce travel funds continually flying east. So he and a few colleagues decided it was time to “take control” and shift the small-meeting balance westward.

They will begin this summer by holding two conferences, one on developmental biology and the other on protein structure and function. In future years, says Rubin, they hope to hold as many as eight such meetings.



Santa Cruz Summer Conferences in Biology

DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY
July 25-30, 1992

Organizers:
David Higgins, Stanford; Cynthia Kenyon, UCSB

Session:
Cell Polarity, Shape & Cycles. Chair: Lucy Shapiro
Embryonic Proliferation & Localization of Determinants. Chair: Ruth Lehmann
Growth Factors & Adult Patterning. Chair: Marc Kirschner
Body Axis Differentiation. Chair: Matthew Scott
Cell-Cell Interactions Determining Cell Fate. Chair: Gerald Rubin
Neural Development. Chair: David Anderson
Sex Determination & Regulatory Pathways. Chair: Barbara Meyer
Mouse Genes Controlling Tissue Development. Chair: Harold Weintraub

PROTEIN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION
August 1-6, 1992

Organizers:
Robert Tijan, UC Berkeley; Thomas Steitz, Yale

Session:
Function of Multiprotein Complexes. Chair: Danny Reinberg
Positive & Negative Regulatory Proteins. Chair: Alexander Johnson
Transcription Factor Function. Chair: Rudolf Grosschedl
Protein-Protein Interactions. Chair: Joseph Nevins
Structural Motifs in Gene Regulation. Chair: Paul Sigler
Protein Stability, Function & Folding. Chair: Bob Sauer
Protein Structure & Molecular Drug Design. Chair: Dan Nathans
Structural Analysis of NTP Binding Motifs. Chair: Sung-Ho Kim

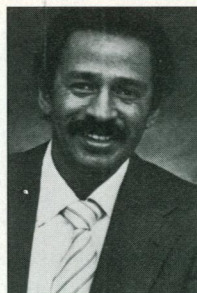
Registration: \$125 (Student & Young Professional: \$75) (Travel & Lodging: \$100) (Total: \$200)
No Mosquitoes, Low Humidity, 75° F, College Dorm Apartments!

Application Deadline: May 15, 1992
For application form contact: David Higgins, UCSB, Santa Cruz, CA 95064

The new Santa Cruz summer conferences offer more than just biology.

Taking a Fire Ax to the Budgetary Fire Wall

■ Hoping to wring some extra cash out of the military budget for domestic programs, some members of Congress are preparing to mount an offensive against the budgetary “fire wall” that separates defense and domestic spending—a move that some say could increase funding available for R&D programs.



John Conyers Jr.

When passed in 1990, the wall was intended to protect defense spending from congressional poaching—thus enforcing budget discipline—as Congress replaced the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit targets with spending caps. Thus far, the White House has shown little interest in changing things. But to sway undecided legislators, the House Budget Committee has drawn up a plan showing that, among other things, re-

moving that wall could free up as much as \$700 million for science agencies in 1993.

Budget committee members clearly hope that the prospect of increased domestic spending will work in their favor. “If we could tear down the walls, it would be a whole new world out there,” says a Democratic staffer who expects the House to vote next week on a proposal by Representative John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) that would do just that. So far, however, opponents of the move—including some legislators with defense industries in their districts—are “holding on like banshees,” says the aide.

Fetal Tissue Fight

■ Supporters of fetal tissue research may soon get the upper hand in the long-running combat between Congress and the Administration over the present ban on federal funding of transplanted research using tissue derived from induced abortion.

Last fall, by a vote of 274 to 144, the House passed a bill that would lift the ban, and now a similar proposal is making its way through the Senate. President Bush has said he would veto any attempt to end the moratorium, but shifting political winds in the Senate may cause him to reconsider. On 4 February, a key Senate committee voted 13 to 4 in favor of a bill that would reverse the ban—with conservative Strom Thurmond (R-SC) on board. Once the bill is on the floor, two other prominent conservative Republicans—Jake Garn (R-UT) and Alan Simpson (R-WY)—are also expected to vote to allow the research to proceed. Bill supporters are confident they have the 60 votes needed to bring the issue to a floor vote and say they may even have the 67 votes needed to override Bush’s veto.

OSI Reorganization Plan Goes Public

■ Officials at the Public Health Service (PHS) are poised to carry out some long-awaited reforms at the Office of Scientific Integrity (OSI), NIH’s misconduct investigative arm. They have sent a comprehensive proposal to Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan that would reorganize the PHS misconduct system and grant every scientist formally accused of misconduct a hearing before a departmental appeals board.

The proposal would bump OSI up one level in the bureaucratic hierarchy, removing it from NIH and installing it under Assistant Secretary for Health James Mason. The office would retain its existing staff but would take on a new, ungainly name: the Office of Research Integrity Assurance. Its policies and procedures would be largely unchanged.

Procedures for handling the results of an OSI investigation would change dramatically, however. The proposal would create an independent adjudication board in Sullivan’s office, with one permanent member drawn from the HHS Departmental Appeals

Board. Up to two scientific advisers could join this panel to hear a specific case. Any scientist accused of misconduct in an investigative report could request a hearing, during which the PHS general counsel would “prosecute” the case. The proposal does not state whether such hearings would be public.

Under the proposal, OSI’s companion office, the Office of Scientific Integrity Review (OSIR), would no longer review the results of OSI investigations. Instead, it would become the executive staff of a new body called the Research Integrity Policy Board, composed of senior PHS officials and headed by the NIH director. The board would review and approve PHS misconduct policies, oversee the new investigative office, and serve as a sounding board for the department’s panel of expert advisers.

First reported in the newsletter *Washington Fax*, these changes would require the hiring of 14 new employees in addition to the 36 already serving in OSI and OSIR. The budget would grow to \$4.4 million from \$3.6 million this year. No deadline has been set for a decision on the proposal.