We retrieved the scientific publications of all 93 candidates from MEDLINE. The total number of publications, the number of publications cited in the Journal Citation Report (JCR) 2000, the number of publications in journals not included in the JCR list, and the total impact factor (IF) were computed. None of these indicators were significantly different between the selected candidates (idonei) and those not selected. Two of the four candidates with an IF greater than 100 (106 was the maximum in our sample) were accepted on their first attempt; the other two were not accepted at all, even after three and four attempts, respectively. Of the 31 candidates accepted on their first attempt (out of the total 39 idonei), 10 passed even with a total IF less than 5 (three had an IF of zero). Successful candidates who had coauthored publications with members of the selection committees were also largely represented.

In Italy (as perhaps is the case in Spain), concorsi apparently fail to select candidates according to their scientific impact. The Spanish government reform, aiming at "a more open, competitive and transparent recruitment" of university professors, is based on a preliminary review of the qualification of aspiring applicants. Universities may then choose candidates. If the verification is based on objective indicators, the new Spanish system might work. Many academic researchers in Italy have grounds to feel that their present system is badly in need of reform.

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Screening Foreign Scholars

WHILE READING JEFF MERVIS'S ARTICLE "Panel would screen foreign scholars" (News of the Week, 17 May, p. 1213), I was reminded of the U.S. government's Committee on Exchanges (COMEX). Born during the Cold War, COMEX was an interagency group of representatives from the State Department, the Department of Defense, and the intelligence community that screened Soviet and Eastern Bloc scientists wanting to visit American institutions. (I attended COMEX meetings while working on international science and technology exchanges for the State Department in the mid-1980s.)

COMEX was concerned with preventing the transfer of sophisticated technologies to communist countries. Now the newly formed Interagency Panel on Advanced Science Security (IPASS) appears to have a broader mandate: to look at all foreign students and scientists—regardless of geographic or political origin—who might be interested in "sensitive topics." That is a large task.

Fortunately, IPASS will have the input of the federal science agencies (the National Science Foundation, NASA, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and so forth), something that COMEX lacked, perhaps to its detriment. A 1982 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) study on scientific communication and national securi-

Letters to the Editor

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ty noted, for example, that some COMEX members had "little acquaintance with the workings of the research community or the conduct of basic research" (*1*, p. 95). IPASS, as its first order of business, should review this NAS study.

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1. Panel on Scientific Communication and National Security, Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy, *Scientific Communication and National Security* (National Academy Press, Washington, DC, 1982) (see www.nap.edu/books/0309033322/html/).

Support of Marine Sustainability Science

IN HIS ARTICLE "CASH-STRAPPED FUND struggles to make science a priority," Adam Bostanci (News Focus, 31 May, p. 1596) misses the boat and the rising tide of support for the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) science-based International Waters Program. Contrary to the "weak scientific underpinnings of many proposals" mentioned in the article, several hundred scientists and technicians from developing countries are bridging the north-south digital divide in sustainability science (*1*). They are joining scientific colleagues from North America and Europe in country-driven projects supporting sustainability objectives for coastal ocean fisheries biomass recovery, habitat restoration, and pollution abatement. These projects encompass the spatial extent of a growing number of the world's large marine ecosystems (LMEs) and address important issues of sustainability science.

A high priority of the LME projects is activating systems for monitoring and reporting on ecological and social conditions. These systems can be integrated into existing systems to provide guidance for efforts to make the transition from unmanaged or poorly managed marine resources to management practices that are focused on the long-term sustainability of marine ecosystems and the resources they support. Marine resource assessment and management projects, based on inputs from local and regional scientists, are planned or under way in 126 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. The science-based projects are tightly linked with finance and resource ministries (e.g., fisheries, energy, environment, and tourism) in a multimodal (productivity, fish/fisheries, pollution, socioeconomic, and governance) country-driven movement toward resource sustainability (*2*). This science-based approach is made possible through the cooperation of the GEF and its United Nations partner agencies and collaborating institutions (*3*). Support for these activities is provided with a commitment of $165 million in GEF, national funding, and donor funding.

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3. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Office of Naval Research, the University of British Columbia, the University of London, the University of Rhode Island, the International Council on the Exploration of the Sea, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and the World Conservation Union.