

Out With the Old, In With the New

If you are President of the United States and you don't like the advice you are receiving, what do you do? You get new advisors.

Several months after disbanding the President's Council on Bioethics, established by President George W. Bush in 2001, President Obama has created a new commission.

The Bush commission, created in 2001 as part of his announcement allowing limited, federally funded human embryonic stem cell research, focused on hot-button subjects. These included stem cell research and human cloning. It may be best remembered as the commission that ASCB past president and 2009 Nobel laureate Elizabeth Blackburn was fired from (see March 2004 *ASCB Newsletter*).



Amy Gutmann

Amy Gutmann, president of the University of Pennsylvania, and James W. Wagner, president of Emory University, will serve as co-chairs of Obama's Presidential Commission for the Study



James W. Wagner

of Bioethical Issues.

The commission is charged with advising the president on bioethical issues connected with advances in biomedicine and other areas of science and technology. In particular, the commission will

identify and promote policies and practices that will ensure the ethical conduct of scientific research, healthcare delivery, and other technological innovations. In announcing the new commission, the White House did not announce any other members. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

It Could Have Been Worse

In December, the U.S. Congress took a break from debating legislation reforming the nation's healthcare system to pass the FY10 federal budget.

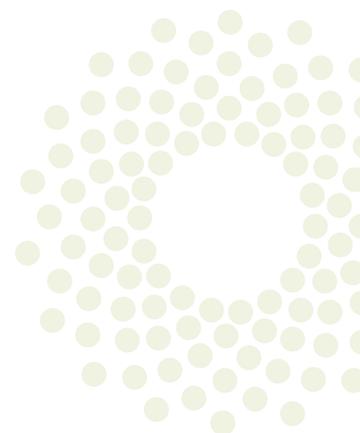
The NIH budget will be \$31 billion, 2.3%, or \$691.8 million more than FY09. President Obama asked for an NIH FY10 budget of \$30.758 billion, \$441 million or 1.4% more than FY09. Earlier in the year, the House of Representatives proposed a \$31.258 billion budget for the NIH. That is \$941 million, or 3.01%, more than the FY09 NIH budget. The Senate Appropriations Committee decided to match the president's request of \$30.758 billion.

The \$10.4 billion for the NIH in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) played a significant role in determining the size of the NIH budget. Earlier in the year, Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education, cited the ARRA funding as the

reason the Senate did not provide the NIH with a larger FY10 appropriation.

Unlike the NIH, the NSF budget for FY10 will be less than the president requested. The president had requested \$7.045 billion, 8.5%, or \$555 million more than FY09. The budget approved by the House of Representatives included \$6.936 billion for the NSF, an increase of \$446 million or 7% from FY09, but \$145 million below what Obama had called for. The Senate Appropriations Committee approved a NSF budget of \$6.917 billion, \$426 million or 6.6% more than FY09 but \$128 million less than the Obama budget request. In the end, the NSF will receive \$6.926 billion for FY10, 6.7% or \$436 million more than the FY09 NSF budget and \$118.5 million less than the president's request. There is no indication that the \$3 billion the NSF received from ARRA played a role in determining the size of the NSF's FY10 budget. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson



ASCB to Obama: Don't Stop Now

If you had the chance to ask U.S. President Barack Obama one thing, what would you ask? In November, the ASCB joined over 330 other scientific and medical societies, patient groups, research institutions, and industry groups in sending the president a letter asking him to continue to invest aggressively in the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The letter to the president thanked Obama for his pledge to restore science to its rightful place. It also thanked him for the strong commitment to scientific research demonstrated through the \$10 billion for the NIH and the \$3 billion for the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The signers of the letter asked the president to continue to make the NIH a priority in FY11. The letter said, "We ask you to make permanent NIH's promising new capacity, avoiding a steep drop-off in its scientific potential and its proven ability to serve as job generator and key component of the R&D platform for the nation's biomedical and high-tech economies."

Without a major increase in the annual NIH budget in FY11, NIH-funded investigators could experience a sharp decline in funding once ARRA funding concludes.

The Obama administration is currently finalizing its FY11 budget proposal, which should be released in the coming weeks. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

An Assignment from the President:

"I'm calling on all 200,000 scientists who work for the federal government to do their part in their communities (to help educate young people): to speak at schools, to create hands-on learning opportunities through efforts like National Lab Day, and to help stoke that same curiosity in students which perhaps led them to pursue a career in science in the first place."

U.S. President Barack Obama during a speech on the "Educate to Innovate" Campaign and Science Teaching and Mentoring Awards. January 6, 2010

Stanford Biochemistry Founders' Award for Doctoral Excellence

Stanford University seeks nominations for the second annual Stanford Biochemistry Founders Award to recognize outstanding achievement by doctoral scholars as part of its commitment to advancing gender diversity in biochemistry and molecular biosciences.

Recipients will participate in a one day symposium in May 2010 at Stanford University. The symposium will consist of scientific presentations by the awardees and by Stanford faculty, and informal discussions with students and faculty. Awardees will be advanced students near the completion of their studies and will not have graduated before 9/1/09. Up to four awardees will be selected on the basis of the quality, originality, and significance of their work; the award will include travel and accommodation expenses and a \$500 honorarium.

Nominations should be submitted electronically (as a single pdf document) by a faculty member, and should include the student's CV, a one-page description of the thesis work (written by the student), and a recommendation letter. A second recommendation letter (pdf) should be sent separately by its author. Nomination materials should state clearly how the nominee's work has advanced understanding of the molecular basis of a significant biological process, as well as how this award will help to advance gender diversity in the field.

The submission deadline is March 20, 2010, by email to: cspitale@stanford.edu.