

## NIH, FDA to Work Together

It's not often that two agencies of the federal government decide to work together, so when they do it's worthy of a special announcement. The U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will begin working together to help speed the approval process for experimental drugs. Present at the February announcement were Francis Collins, Director of the NIH; Margaret Hamburg, U.S. Commissioner of the FDA; and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius.

In her prepared remarks, Secretary Sebelius said, "We've all been following the remarkable advances in biomedical sciences led by the NIH with great enthusiasm for years. However, much more can be done to speed the progress from new

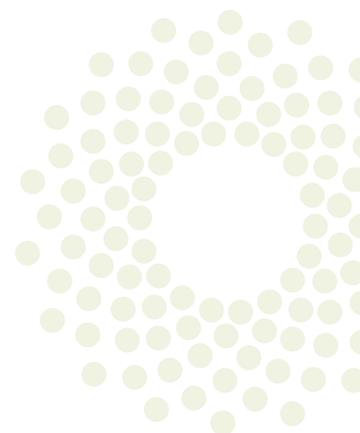
scientific discoveries to treatments for patients."

As part of the new collaboration, the NIH and FDA will form a leadership council led by senior scientists that will develop ways the two agencies can work together more effectively. The two agencies will also work together to make sure NIH researchers design their initial studies to include the data FDA regulators will need for drug approval.

The joint initiative also includes \$6.75 million in grant funding for studies in regulatory science aimed at improving the drug approval process.

To watch a video replay of the joint NIH/FDA announcement, go to <http://videocast.nih.gov/Summary.asp?File=15644>. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson



## NSF Director to Leave

Arden L. Bement, the director of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), has announced that he will leave before the end of his term, which expires in November 2010. Bement will return to Purdue University, where he previously served as a nuclear engineering professor and head of the Purdue University School of Nuclear Engineering, to head the Global Policy Research Institute.



Arden L. Bement

Photo: Sam Kiftner/kiftner.com

Bement was appointed to the NSF post by U.S. President George Bush in November 2004. Before taking over at the NSF, Bement served as director of the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology. From February 2004 until his confirmation to the NSF post in November of that year, Bement actually led both agencies. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

## Legislation Would Halt Research

A bill introduced in Congress last year to prohibit research using great apes has attracted the attention of members of the biomedical research community.

In March 2009, Rep. Ed Towns (D-NY) introduced the Great Ape Protection Act of 2009 (GAPA). The bill prohibits "invasive" research on great apes and the use of federal funds to conduct the research. It also prevents the breeding of apes for invasive research and requires the federal government to provide for the permanent retirement of any apes it owns or controls. The Towns bill also includes civil

penalties of up to \$10,000 for each violation.

Several members of the biomedical research community, particularly primate research centers around the U.S., have recently written to members of the U.S. Congress expressing concern about GAPA and refuting some of the portions of the bill. In their letter, the groups highlight the major advances that have been made thanks to research using chimpanzee models. The letter also points out that a federally funded sanctuary system is already in place that provides for "retired" chimpanzees. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

## Congress Hears Call for Lab Renovations

Don't forget the research infrastructure. That was the message coming from a recent hearing held by the U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology.

As part of a review of the America COMPETES Act, the House Science and Technology Committee held a hearing in February to review the research and research training infrastructure needs of universities and colleges in the U.S. The Committee learned that increased fiscal difficulties at the state level have led to a decline in support for research infrastructure at many U.S. public institutions. In addition, private donations and investment returns at both public and private universities and colleges have fallen in the last few years.

This decline is not new. In 2005, before the start of the current economic downturn, the 2005 Survey of Science and Engineering Research found that states were deferring needed

facility renovation projects costing as much as \$3.5 billion.

During the hearing, witnesses told the Committee that it is necessary to support both researchers and research infrastructure. In many cases, they said, updated facilities improve the productivity of researchers.

Both the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) are devoting sizable amounts of funding to research infrastructure. At the NIH, approximately \$2 billion of its \$10 billion in ARRA funds has been set aside for infrastructure and instrumentation. President Obama's FY11 NSF budget request also includes almost \$2 billion for research infrastructure.

To view the whole hearing, go to <http://science.edgeboss.net/wmedia/science/scitech10/022310.wvx>. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

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