

US presidential candidates receive avalanche of advice on s&t, r&d, innovation

An unprecedented outpouring of advice has been directed by the science, technology, academic, and business communities to campaign advisors for presidential candidates Senators John McCain and Barack Obama.

“I’ve never seen such an intense flow of detailed ideas, advice, and guidance [on these topics] before to presidential candidates,” a veteran Hill staffer told *FTW* last week.

“The quality of the advice being submitted is remarkable,” a former top federal s&t official said. “I don’t think it’s ever been so relevant.”

Evidence of bipartisan concerns about ensuring the next US president is fully aware of the importance of a robust national s&t system is offered by a ‘virtual petition’ cosigned by Mary Good, President Clinton’s under secretary for technology (1993-1996), and Phillip Bond, who held the same post (2001-2005) for President George W. Bush.

Now dean of the college of engineering at the Univ. of Arkansas in Little Rock, Good chairs the Alliance for S&T Research in America (ASTRA). Bond is president & CEO of the Information Technology Assn. of America in Washington DC.

“[W]e believe that the immediate need for increased federal support for scientific r&d investments and the adoption of effective national innovation and competitiveness policies are issues that transcend partisan goals,” they said recently. “We can’t afford stagnation and incoherence in our future policies or we will certainly pay a very steep price as a society.”

Good and Bond support the *10 Points for*

Inside:

- DOE’s model agreements for research access
 - NASA, South Korea sign space memorandum
 - Letter on APST sent to presidential candidates
 - New transition council holds second meeting
 - PTO, major IP agencies plan work sharing
 - Argonne lab teams up for tribology research
 - AHRQ plans healthcare innovations survey
 - Ames, Odyssey sign Space Act Agreement
 - EDA seeks regional innovation project bids
 - ITIF issues report on innovation stimulus
 - NIH funds 16 SEPA projects
 - EPA helps develop electronics recycling guide
 - FDA, USAMRIID sign MOU
 - FDA’s CBER, NHLBI sign MOU
 - NASA’s cool new habitat needs a name!
 - NCRR funds five new IDeA awards
 - STEM Talent 2008 proves an attractive event
- Technology licenses: Navy, I. People in the news*

America’s Future petition, which is to be delivered in early 2009 to the new president.

The petition is at: <www.usinnovation.org>

OECD’s STI Outlook 2008

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member governments should increase their international cooperation and strengthen links between public research bodies and industry in order to boost science and innovation and drive long-term growth, asserts the latest *OECD Science, Technology and Industry Outlook 2008* report, released Oct.27 in Paris.

While the US remains the world’s leading investor in r&d, spending \$344-billion in 2006, its share of global r&d has been falling due to weak business spending on r&d. The EU-27 share, which includes France,

Germany and the UK, has also declined.

China's spending on r&d in the business sector as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), has grown rapidly from 0.25% in 1996 to 1.01% in 2006, almost catching up with the EU-27's 1.11%. In real terms, this is an annual increase of 20% by China over the past decade compared with 3% r&d growth in the business sector in the EU-27 and US.

Emerging economies account for a sharply growing share of global spending on r&d, up from 11.7% in 1996 to 18.4% in 2005, the most recent year for which data are available.

Reviewing different challenges facing OECD countries seeking to foster innovation, the 2008 Outlook identifies a number of key themes that need to be tackled urgently. These include:

- Increase cooperation with foreign companies and governments: OECD countries must strengthen capacity to attract foreign investment and foster participation in global innovation networks;
- With growing demand for skilled workers and growing competition for foreign talent, OECD countries will need to improve policies to foster talent in the domestic economy; and
- Innovation in companies goes far beyond technological innovation and also includes process, organizational and marketing innovation: policies to foster innovation will need to be expanded to capture the full range of innovation activities.

To help countries enhance their science and innovation policies, OECD is currently developing an Innovation Strategy, based on a mandate endorsed in 2007 by ministers.

OECD Science, Technology and Industry Outlook 2008 reviews trends and developments in science, technology and innovation policy in OECD member countries and six emerging economies, including China, Israel and the Russian Federation.

More details, including country profiles for 36 countries, are at www.oecd.org/sti/outlook

DOE access agreements

Under secretary for science Raymond Orbach, who also serves as the Department of Energy's (DOE) technology transfer coordinator, last week announced two new model agreements

that will expand access to DOE's world-class research facilities by academia and industry.

"This new approach will allow both university and industrial researchers greater access to our specialized, world-class facilities across the lab system and to work more closely with our scientists on real world problems and potential solutions," Orbach said Oct.27.

The streamlined agreements will also simplify the process for gaining access to DOE facilities and promote the transfer of technologies from DOE national labs.

Pre-approved, standardized model agreements - one for proprietary research and the other for non-proprietary research - are now authorized for use at all designated DOE user facilities at all DOE labs. They are intended to need minimal further negotiation and to be executed quickly. Prospective users can use the same applicable general agreement at every facility.

Some of the nation's most advanced r&d user facilities, including nanoscale science research centers, synchrotron light sources, and supercomputers, are at national labs.

Each year, DOE Office of Science user facilities collectively serve over 20,000 users from academia, national labs and industry. That number of users could, DOE anticipates, more than double in the next decade as new agreements are fully implemented across DOE labs and facilities.

User-facility agreements have been used successfully for over a decade for proprietary and non-proprietary research at selected DOE Office of Science-funded user facilities. More recently, the agreements have been implemented at DOE's five Nanoscale Science Research Centers for collaborative, non-commercial research.

Authority to use more streamlined versions of these proven agreements is now extended to all other DOE labs and facilities that are approved as "designated user facilities," including those operated under DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration.

For commercial research activities,

researchers may opt for the proprietary user agreement, under which users pay the full cost for use of specialized DOE lab equipment and, with limited exceptions, keep as proprietary technical data as well as any new inventions.

For non-commercial, basic science research activities, researchers may opt for the non-proprietary user agreement, under which the user pays only the costs of its own research with the DOE lab and may access specialized lab equipment and collaborate with lab scientists. Data produced under non-proprietary research is publicly available. The non-proprietary user agreement is expected to be especially beneficial in facilitating access of universities to DOE's scientific facilities.

The new agreements are a major step toward implementing Energy Secretary Sam Bodman's Jan.31 2008 Policy Statement on Technology Transfer, which sought "a major review and revision as appropriate of [DOE] technology transfer policies" with a goal of accelerating and simplifying the process.

Labs will use a merit review process to select researchers who will have access to facilities.

For more information, contact DOE's office of the assistant general counsel for technology transfer and intellectual property at (202) 586-2802; GC-62@hq.doe.gov

More details at: <www.gc.doe.gov/1002.htm>

NASA, South Korea MOI

NASA assistant administrator for external relations Michael O'Brien and South Korea's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) director-general for big science Munki Lee signed a joint statement of intent last week that identifies potential interest in future cooperation in civil space and aeronautics activities.

The two agencies agree to conduct discussions to identify new cooperative activities related to space exploration, Earth science, planetary science, human space flight and aeronautics research, according to the statement signed at MEST in Seoul Oct.30.

The fundamental goal will be to advance US

and South Korean interests through cooperation in space and aeronautics programs. A joint report is expected in eight months.

Potential cooperative efforts being explored include exchange of research data and analysis, potential contributions of scientific instruments and hardware to support future missions, and collaborative exploration architecture planning. They may also include the International Lunar Network, an ongoing multilateral initiative to establish a robotic network on the moon's surface, the Global Exploration Strategy, and the International Space Exploration Coordination Group.

Science advisor upgrade?

The next US president should appoint a White House science advisor by Inauguration Day (Jan.20) and give the advisor cabinet rank, according to a letter sent to the two presidential candidates last week by almost 180 organizations representing the business, education and science communities.

In identical letters sent to Senators John McCain and Barack Obama Oct.30, the organizations note that s&t ingenuity will be needed to address domestic and international challenges such as healthcare, rising energy costs, US economic competitiveness, and global climate change.

They believe it's critical that the next US president "seek out and rely upon sound scientific and technological advice early and often in the new administration." The organizations also write that it's "essential that you be prepared to quickly appoint a science advisor who is a nationally respected leader with the appropriate scientific, management and policy skills necessary for this critically important role."

The next president is urged to assign the science advisor the title of Assistant to the President for Science and Technology (APST) and give the position cabinet rank, the same status that's currently given to the Office of Management and Budget director,

the Environmental Protection Agency administrator, and the US Trade Representative.

President George W. Bush didn't name John Marburger as his choice for science advisor until June 25 2001 - five months after the Bush administration took office - and Marburger was not given cabinet rank. The Senate didn't confirm Marburger, a former Brookhaven National Laboratory director, until Oct.23 2001, by which time key policies on climate change and stem cell research had already had been announced by the White House.

The letters were signed by American Assn. for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) CEO Alan Leshner, Assn. of American Universities president Robert Berdahl, Council on Competitiveness president Deborah Wince-Smith, Center for the Study of the Presidency president David Abshire, Carnegie Institution for Science president Richard Meserve, and former Congressman John Porter, R-Ill., who chaired a recent National Academies' committee on ensuring the best s&t appointments in the new administration.

Text of the letters is at:

<www.aaas.org/news/releases/2008/media/1031letters/letter_science_advisor_mccain.pdf>

<www.aaas.org/news/releases/2008/media/1031letters/letter_science_advisor_obama.pdf>

TCC holds second meeting

The newly-created Transition Coordinating Council (TCC), as part of efforts for a smooth transfer of power from one presidential administration to the next, met for the second time on Oct.28 with outside experts on the transition process.

Committed to establishing and executing a transition plan that minimizes disruption, maintains continuity, and addresses major changes in government since the 2000 transition, including the *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004*, as well as creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Office of Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), and the Homeland Security Council, the TCC was

created by an executive order (E.O.13476) signed by President Bush last month and the council's members include the president's chief of staff and others with authority and expertise that affect a transition, as well as senior officials in national security, homeland security, and the economy.

The E.O. allows TCC to "obtain a wide range of facts and information on prior transitions and best practices" from outside experts. Those experts attended last week's meeting included former Bush chief of staff Andy Card (who was director of the 1992 Bush-Clinton Transition), former Clinton chief of staff Mack McLarty, National Academy of Public Administration president Jennifer Dorn, American Enterprise Institute resident scholar Norman Ornstein, and Partnership for Public Service president & CEO Max Stier.

Briefings are being prepared by federal departments and White House offices for the president-elect's team on significant pending policy issues as well as the structure of those departments, agencies, and offices.

Career executives in each department or agency who may assume extra responsibilities before arrival of new political appointees have also been identified, briefed, and included in a wide range of preparatory activities.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) officials will continue to meet with career employees to detail their responsibilities and clarify the transition process.

Individual agencies are also taking agency-specific steps. For example, the Department of Defense's (DOD) Transition Task Force is preparing to host transition teams of the president-elect. DHS is holding conferences and exercises designed to boost incident management capabilities and cross-departmental awareness, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice held an offsite meeting Oct.9-10 with senior State Dept. and USAID officials to discuss transition planning and foreign policy and management challenges facing the new administration.

State is also preparing a list of pending political/economic commitments arranged by country. Intelligence briefings have been provided to the candidates by the ODNI, supported by the entire intelligence community, and are continuing.

The White House has also worked with Justice Dept., the FBI, and the transition teams to create an “orderly and efficient process.” To ensure a confidential process, the White House doesn’t have access to the numbers and identities of cleared individuals, but confirms regularly with the transition teams that the process meets the transition teams’ needs. All interactions with the candidates and their transition teams have been equitable.

The Office of Government Ethics has trained additional staff to prepare for an increase in financial disclosure filings and has held meetings with both campaign transition teams to discuss these rules.

One of the biggest challenges faced historically by incoming administrations has been the time required to obtain security clearances for key officials, White House officials admit. The *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act* allows major-party candidates to request clearances for key transition personnel before the election so those individuals will have the necessary clearances should their candidate win.

IP offices plan work share

Development of a ‘blueprint’ for work sharing among the five major intellectual property offices (IP5) to address their common challenges was announced by Commerce’s Patent & Trademark Office (PTO) on Oct.31.

The IP5 heads met Oct.27 & 28 in Jeju, Korea to discuss a shared vision for work sharing and collaboration. Attending the meeting, chaired by Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO), were European Patent Office (EPO) president Alison Brimelow, Japan Patent Office (JPO) president Takashi Suzuki, State Intellectual Property Office of the People’s Republic of China (SIPO) commissioner Tian Lipu, and US under

secretary for intellectual property and PTO director Jon Dudas.

Elimination of unnecessary duplication of work among the offices, enhancement of patent examination efficiency and quality, and guarantee of the stability of patent right, was adopted by the five offices as a vision statement for the work-sharing initiative.

As economic barriers between nations fade, innovators want their intellectual creations protected concurrently in major markets; so, applications for the same technology are filed at more than one patent office.

The IP5 established a cooperative framework of ten ‘Foundation Projects’ devised to harmonize the search and examination environment of each office and to standardize the information-sharing process. These projects are expected to facilitate the work-sharing initiative by enhancing the quality of patent searches and examinations and building mutual trust in each other’s work.

Recognizing the trend toward greater globalization, the IP5 heads seek to minimize the resultant redundancy of patent searches and examinations and also share a concern about the growing number of pending patent applications and the prolonged pendency period. They also acknowledge that delays in granting patents hinder the promotion of innovation, which is an intrinsic function of the patent system. To tackle this global phenomenon in an efficient manner, the five IP agencies have agreed to collaborate in a work-sharing initiative.

The projects, lead IP offices, and aims are:
 —Common documentation database (EPO): Assemble a common set of relevant patent and non-patent literature from around the world to assist patent examiners in their prior art searches;
 —Common approach for a hybrid classification (EPO): Enable joint and efficient updating of patent classification and facilitate reuse of work among the patent offices;
 —Common application format (JPO): Facilitate the filing procedure of each office by using a common application format and an electronic or

digitized patent application filing (in XML) and subsequent processing and publication in XML;

- Common access to search & examination results (JPO): Enable examiners to find one-stop references in the dossier information of other offices, such as search and examination results, and conduct priority document exchange (PDX) to reduce costs of ordering copies of priority documents for applicants and administrative costs of electronic processing for offices;
- Common training policy (KIPO): Standardize the training of patent examiners at each office, helping examiners to produce equivalent results of search and examination at the five offices;
- Mutual machine translation (KIPO): Help offices overcome the language barrier of patent information and allow greater access to each other's patent information;
- Common rules for examination practice & quality control (SIPO): Execute patent examinations at a similar standard and quality through common rules of examination practice and quality control;
- Common statistical parameter system for examination (SIPO): Establish a system of common statistical parameters for all examinations at the five offices; and conduct statistical tasks and exchange information on examination practices under common rules and parameters, building on work of the Trilateral statistical working group;
- Common approach to sharing & documenting search strategies (PTO): Promote re-utilization by enabling patent examiners of each office to understand each other's search strategy;
- Common search & examination support tools (PTO): Establish system of common search and examination tools to facilitate work-sharing.

Each IP office will oversee implementation of two Foundation Projects. As an initial step, the offices agreed that by the end of April 2009, at the latest, they would exchange detailed proposals on each project and identify areas of agreement and specific implementation details.

Benefits of work-sharing are expected to be tangible and substantial, since each year up to 250,000 applications are filed at two or more IP5 offices. Re-utilization of work by another office for these duplicate applications could lead to significant improvements in patent examination efficiency for all IP5 offices.

At the close of last week's meeting, the heads of the IP5 offices pledged to continue working together toward realizing their shared vision and agreed to convene the next IP5 meeting in 2009.

Argonne joins ICAT team

Argonne National Laboratory has teamed with the Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), Univ. of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and Northwestern Univ. to form the Illinois Center for Advanced Tribology (ICAT).

Tribology is the science of friction, lubrication and interactive surfaces in motion.

"ICAT members bring together complementary, and in some cases unique, capabilities to resolve critical wear and lubrication issues in the development of advanced alternative energy technologies and biomedical implants and improve functionality and longevity of systems that operate in extreme environments," Argonne tribology section manager George Fenske said Oct.30.

"Through the center we plan to develop new materials, coatings, surface texturing and lubricants," he said, "that when integrated together make robust tribological systems that provide reliable and durable performance under extreme conditions."

Alternative transportation fuels, such as ethanol, biofuels and hydrogen, have very different sets of friction, wear and lubrication challenges noted Northwestern professor Jane Wang. "Biofuels, even E-85, can cause corrosion and wear to surfaces they come into contact with," she said. "In the case of hydrogen-powered vehicles, new lubricant formulas are needed for the smooth operation of moving parts since hydrogen fuel cells, which require a pure environment, prohibit the use of oil-based lubricants."

ICAT also intends to help improve the durability and long-term health risks of replacement human joints.

"While current artificial joints have

relatively good wear resistance, wear still occurs and that's of particular concern when it comes to younger people who must rely on artificial joints implants for several decades," explained UIC College of Engineering professor and associate dean Michael McNallan. "We want to develop biomaterials with in-vivo tribological behaviors. Our goal is to help develop 'joints for life.'"

Mechanical systems operated under extreme loads, temperatures and speeds, such as ones used in military operations in the Middle East, face premature failure as a result of poor lubricity.

"Thermal degradation of base fluids and additives are accelerated at high temperatures, and oil viscosity is poor at high temperatures and further aggravated by the presence of sand," said UIUC professor Andreas Polycarpou, "so one of the many innovations we plan to make is the development of self-healing surfaces; such technology would be highly desirable for extreme-condition applications."

ICAT will enable its partner organizations to respond faster to requests for research proposals, because they won't have to develop a work agreement for each request they wish to respond to.

The center will also solicit research funds from its parent organizations and private and industrial sources, as well as respond to proposals from Illinois and federal agencies, including DOE and NSF.

Argonne is managed for DOE's Office of Science by UChicago Argonne LLC.

AHRQ's innovation survey

The Department of Health & Human Services' (HHS) Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), which plans to launch a AHRQ Healthcare Innovations Exchange web site to accelerate diffusion and adoption of innovative health care delivery changes, is seeking approval of surveys to collect information from a selected group of about 825 health care innovators. These innovators will

be interviewed by telephone by project staff.

AHRQ's priorities include identifying and highlighting innovations to help reduce disparities in health care and health status, ones that will have significant impact on the overall value of health care, where innovators have a strong interest in participating, and innovations that have received AHRQ support.

Profiles of health care service innovations will be made accessible to the public through the AHRQ's Healthcare Innovations Exchange. Selected innovations must meet six criteria: focus directly or indirectly on patient care; intend to improve one or more domains of health care quality; be truly innovative in its setting or target population; information on the innovation is in the public domain; the innovator is willing to contribute information to the Health Care Innovations Exchange; and there's reason to believe the innovation will be effective.

The ultimate decision to include a detailed profile of the innovation on the web site will depend on several factors, including an evaluation by AHRQ, its priorities, and the number of similar ideas already in the Innovations Exchange database.

A selected group of 825 health care innovations will be considered for the profiles to be published on the Innovations Exchange.

Some 275 innovators will participate in the initial data collection each year for a total of 825 over the three-year period. Of the 275 respondents/year, AHRQ estimates 41 (15%) will submit information via e-mail and will be interviewed for a shorter period of time.

The remaining respondents will be interviewed more extensively. Annual follow-up interviews, each averaging 30-minutes, are expected to be conducted for published profiles.

For more details, contact Doris Lefkowitz at (301) 427-1477; doris.lefkowitz@ahrq.hhs.gov

Ames, Odyssey collaborate

Under a reimbursable Space Act Agreement, NASA Ames Research Center in Moffett Field, Calif. is collaborating with a commercial partner, Odyssey Moon Ventures LLC, to develop a lunar lander for future low-cost missions to the moon.

“NASA is a big supporter of developing the commercial space sector, and is interested in developing small spacecraft for future lunar exploration,” Ames Research Center director Pete Worden said Oct.30. “By making these designs available to commercial enterprises, we hope to spark rapid development of low-cost, small spacecraft missions.”

Under terms of its agreement with Odyssey, Ames will share its small spacecraft technical data and expertise with the company. In return, Odyssey will reimburse Ames for the cost of providing the technical support, and share technical data from its engineering tests and actual lunar missions with NASA.

As part of this arrangement, NASA will share data from the Common Spacecraft Bus, a small spacecraft system under development at Ames, which uses a modular design that can be adapted to a variety of mission configurations as an orbiter or a lunar lander. NASA data from the Hover Test Vehicle, an engineering prototype of the Common Spacecraft Bus developed at Ames to evaluate hardware and software systems, will also be shared with the company.

A US company focused on development of commercial systems for lunar exploration, Odyssey Moon Ventures is headed by Jay Honeycutt, a veteran space executive with more than 40 years of experience, that includes serving as Kennedy Space Center director and Lockheed Martin Space Operations president.

In addition to work related to this collaboration, Odyssey will be responsible for US launch operations and ground processing of spacecraft that will be used in future commercial flights to the moon.

Based in Henderson, Nev., Odyssey Moon Ventures LLC also has offices in Washington DC and Cocoa Beach, Fla. It also collaborates

with Odyssey Moon Ltd, which has offices in Toronto, London, and Washington DC.

EDA regional innovation

Applications are now being re-solicited by Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) for a regional innovation systems research project.

In May EDA funded two FY08 awards under its regional innovation systems project, with one recipient in West Virginia and the other in California. Both projects highlight regional economies in those respective areas.

Under the agency’s FY09 National Technical Assistance (NTA), Training, Research and Evaluation program funding, EDA is interested in making another award exploring regional innovation systems in another location.

The project will involve five deliverables: a comparative analysis; research & analysis of best-practice case-studies; development of a communication & dissemination strategy for project findings; a practitioner-accessible report (or equivalent) that presents project findings; and delivery of the practitioner-accessible report (or equivalent) document to EDA in a format suitable for posting to its web site and all data and other materials used in the analysis.

EDA, which anticipates the project will be funded at \$200,000 to \$300,000, is operating with appropriations under the *Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2009*. This Act makes available appropriations based on FY08 funding levels that are pro-rated through March 6 2009.

The deadline for submissions is Nov.17.

For more details, contact Kerstin Millius at kmillius@eda.doc.gov or (202) 482-3280.

The complete announcement is at:
<www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/FFON.xml>

Stimulus package report

Eight specific proposals to spur US spending and economic activity in the short-term, perhaps as part of a second stimulus package,

are laid out in a 9-page report by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) released Oct.29.

Rather than craft a conventional spending-oriented stimulus package focused solely on tax cuts for individuals and spending hikes, ITIF president Robert Atkinson proposes in *Timely, Targeted, Temporary and Transformative: Crafting an Innovation-Based Economic Stimulus Package* that Congress should craft a so-called stimulus package of which at least a part will give a quick 'shot in the arm' to the nation's economy, while also boosting investment that spurs productivity growth and innovation, such as IT.

In an economy that faces key challenges ahead to increase international competitiveness, raise productivity, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, he believes any stimulus package should also seek to help in part to address these challenges.

The report advocates these measures:

- Let Information Technology (IT) investments to be fully expensed in 2009;
- Offer a tax credit for investments in health IT made in 2009;
- Provide \$2-billion to US colleges and universities that invest in needed research infrastructure in 2009;
- Allow a 50% tax credit for investments in energy efficient equipment in 2009;
- Provide \$1.6-billion for computers and broadband for low-income families with children at home;
- Make a one-time \$8-billion infusion into the Highway Trust Fund to spur ready-to-go surface transportation infrastructure investments;
- Permit US companies to repatriate their foreign earnings in 2009 at a lower corporate tax rate;
- Provide forgivable loans to states to shore up budget shortfalls, provided that states expand 'rainy day' funds in later years.

Atkinson believes any stimulus package should be timely, targeted and temporary, but sees no reason why part of it can't also be transformative.

The ITIF report is at:

<<http://www.swiftpage5.com/Speclicks.aspx?Acc=ITIF.Mail&SPCED=C081029152200&LNK=1&UId=714>>

NIH funds SEPA projects

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is to provide up to an estimated \$17-million to fund 16 Science Education Partnership Awards (SEPA's).

Led by the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR), a part of NIH, SEPA's provide two to five years of support to stimulate scientific curiosity and encourage hands-on science education activities. By supporting collaboration between scientists, educators and community organizations, SEPA projects help improve public understanding of NIH-funded medical research and encourage young people to select science as a career path.

"Now in its 18th year, the SEPA program reaches tens of thousands annually in more than 40 states, Puerto Rico and about 15 American Indian communities," NCRR director Dr Barbara Alving said Oct.30. "Through these collaborations, students gain skills and engage their imaginations as they learn about the mysteries of disease, how to stay healthy and perhaps set a course for their future careers."

SEPA projects advance science and health education through ways such as interactive traveling exhibits, 3-D animated lessons, virtual and mobile labs and online teaching curricula.

These 16 new awards bring the SEPA portfolio to 66 active grants, including 18 underway at science museums and planetariums.

The 2008 Science Education Partnership Award recipients are: American Museum of Natural History (New York, N.Y.): Human health & human bulletins: Scientists and teens explore health sciences; 5-year award, \$1.09-million; American Physiological Society (Bethesda, Md.): Six star science for student-centered learning; 3-year award, \$794,500; Denver Museum of Nature & Science: Genetics of taste: A flavor for health-community lab & education programs; 3-year award, \$655,000; East Carolina Univ. (Greenville, N.C.): FoodMaster: Impacting K-12 learning environments - Phase II; 2-year award, \$504,000; Georgia State Univ. (Atlanta): Helping

K-12 students become fluent in the language of DNA; 3-year award, \$760,000; Harvard Medical School (Boston, Mass.): Opening the pipeline for native high schools: Phase II; 2-year award*, \$538,000; Iowa State Univ. (Ames): Meta!Blast: An immersive interactive learning module for cell biology; 3-year award, \$771,500; Kansas Univ. Medical Center (Kansas City): PathOlogical life sciences training program for students & families; 5-year award, \$1.25-million; Montclair State Univ. (N.J.): Epidemiology and the energy balance equation; 5-year award, \$1.3-million; New York Hall of Science (N.Y.): Evolution and health traveling exhibition & education programs; 5-year award, \$1.35-million; Northwest Assn. for Biomedical Research (Seattle, Wash.): Collaborations to understand research and ethics (CURE); 5-year award, \$1.35-million; Penn State College of Medicine (Hershey, Pa.): Investing in the future: Collaborative research experiences for students & teachers; 5-year award, \$1.31-million; Univ. of Alaska, Fairbanks: Biomedical partnership for research education pipeline in Alaska (Alaska BioPREP); 5-year award, \$1.35-million; UC San Francisco: Pathways: Promoting access to the health sciences through partnership; 5-year award, \$1.33-million; Univ. of Georgia (Athens): Learning biological processes through animations and inquiry: A new approach; 5-year award, \$1.3-million; Univ. of Hawaii at Manoa (Honolulu): Pacific education and research for leadership in science (PEARLS); 5-year award, \$1.31-million.

* - Funding for this award was provided by six NIH institutes.

For project details, visit <www.ncrrsepa.org>

Electronics recycle guide

New guidelines for electronics recyclers on how to run safe and environmentally protective recycling operations were issued last week.

Developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as part of a group of recycling stakeholders, the *Responsible Recycling (R2) Practices for Use in Accredited Certification Programs for Electronics Recyclers* promotes better environmental, worker safety, and public health practices for electronics recyclers.

“There should be no doubt that choosing to reuse or recycle used electronics is the right choice for our environment,” EPA assistant administrator for solid waste and emergency

response Susan Parker Bodine said Oct.31. “These voluntary guidelines will help assure Americans that their used electronics will be recycled safely and responsibly.”

Thirteen principles are listed in the R2 guide to help electronics recyclers ensure the material is handled safely and legally in the US and other countries. It calls on recyclers to establish a management system for environmental and worker safety, develop a policy that promotes reuse and material recovery over landfill or incineration, and use practices that cut exposures or emissions during recycling operations.

The group that developed the guidelines consists of federal and state governments, electronics manufacturers and recyclers, and trade associations, and will now focus on a certification process for responsible recyclers.

For more on the guidelines, visit:

<www.epa.gov/epawaste/conservematerials/ecycling/r2practices.htm>

FDA, USAMRIID sign MOU

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the US Army Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID).

The MOU, which identifies terms of the collaboration between FDA and USAMRIID in emergency preparedness, and specifically for sharing of information and collaborative activities related to biological threat agents and diagnostics to detect such biological threats.

The MOU took effect Sept.5.

For more details, contact Nancy Pluhowski (FDA) at (240) 276-3816 or Dan Coffman (USAMRIID) at (301) 619-6886.

FDA, NHLBI sign MOU

The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health.

The MOU outlines terms of collaboration between CBER and NHLBI in areas of mutual concern for protecting and improving public health, and provides for implementation of a plan to promote better communication and understanding of regulations, policies, and statutory responsibilities.

The MOU took effect Sept. 11 and also provides a framework for information sharing.

For more details, contact Keith Wonnacott (CBER) at (301) 827-5102 or John Thomas (NHLBI) at (301) 435-0065.

NASA's cool new habitat!

NASA, which is currently conducting a test of a lightweight, durable, inflatable habitat at the National Science Foundation's McMurdo Station in Antarctica, has partnered with the Challenger Center for Space Education to engage students in activities for astronaut housing on the moon with a contest to name a habitat in Antarctica.

Funded through NASA's Innovative Partnership Program's Seed Fund initiative, with in-kind resource contributions from NSF and ILC Dover of Frederica, Del., maker of the structure, the inflatable habitat is one of several concepts being studied for astronaut housing.

The structure looks like a child's bounce house, but is far more sophisticated. Insulated, heated and pressurized, the habitat has power and offers 384-square-feet of living space. During tests, sensors will allow engineers to monitor the habitat's performance.

The *Name that Habitat* competition is being organized and conducted by the Challenger Center for students in grades 6 through 10 until Nov. 20. Subject matter experts are being recruited by the center to serve as judges for the contest and will provide prizes and other items for the winner and participants.

The competition helps NASA fulfill its mission to promote interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education. The winner will be selected later this year and announced in January 2009 by scientists in Antarctica.

The Challenger Center, founded in 1986 by

families of the astronauts lost during the last flight of the *Challenger* space shuttle, aims to foster student interest in careers in STEM.

Student, teachers and the public can follow progress on the habitat through the project.

More details at: <www.challenger.org/hab>

NCRN funds Idea awards

Up to \$55-million is to be provided by the National Center for Research Resources for five new Institutional Development Awards (IDeA) in the next five years.

"It's through this focused and innovative approach that we're producing a pipeline of researchers who will become future leaders working to improve the health of diverse populations," NCRN director Dr Barbara Alving said Oct. 23.

The awards, which will support multi-disciplinary centers, each focused on a general area of research, are designed to improve the competitiveness of investigators in states that historically have not received significant levels of competitive NIH research funding.

New centers are being established at: Univ. of Hawaii, Honolulu (\$10.5-million) to study reproductive biology; Univ. of Kentucky, Lexington (\$10.53-million) to identify mechanisms linking obesity to cardiovascular disease; Univ. of Louisville Research Foundation Inc., Ky. (\$11.60-million) to study cardiovascular causes and consequences of diabetes & obesity; Univ. of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha (\$10.66-million) to research nanomedicine, drug delivery, therapeutics & diagnostics; and Mind Research Network, Albuquerque, N.M. (\$11.64-million) to study neural mechanisms of schizophrenia.

More details at: <www.ncrr.nih.gov/idea>

Postdocs event a success

Last month's STEM Talent 2008 Symposium and Career Fair at the National Institutes of Health's Natcher Center in Bethesda, Md. proved to be a successful mix of attractions.

The event, which has become a national model, is for current postdoctoral fellows in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

(STEM) fields and serves as a valuable talent pool for companies wishing to recruit the “brightest scientific brains” in the Maryland, Northern Virginia and Washington DC area.

According to the organizers, 593 postdocs attended and 58 exhibitors (38 of them hiring companies) participated in the day-long event.

The quality and preparedness of the postdocs were praised by the recruiters, who expect to make some matches as a result of the event.

Strong interest in non-academic careers, especially entrepreneurial and corporate opportunities, was revealed among the postdoc fellows during the conference sessions.

Kauffman Foundation for Entrepreneurship, which was a sponsor and conducted focus sessions and one-on-one meetings with postdocs to spark entrepreneurship, noted how they can serve as tech-transfer agents between companies and their former labs.

Rockville Economic Development Inc. (REDI), which has spearheaded the event, will re-survey the postdocs and participating companies during the next six-to-nine months to monitor employment resulting from the STEM Talent 2008 event.

Technology licenses

Navy Department’s NAVFACESC Technology Transfer Office at Port Hueneme, Calif. intends to grant a revocable, nonassignable, exclusive patent license to **Vista Leak Detection Inc.** for a portable fuel storage tank leak detection system (US pats. 7,143,634 & 7,143,635 and any continuations, divisionals or re-issues.) The field-of-use will be tank leak detection for industrial markets in the US and certain foreign countries. Able to detect fuel leaks from a storage tank at a leak rate of 0.1 gallons/hour, the system has a 95% detection rate.

People in the news

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The National Science Resources Center (NSRC) last week named **Rowena Douglas** as its new deputy director of program planning & management. “I’m thrilled about working for an organization for which I have so much respect,” Douglas said Oct.27. Her appointment took effect Oct.27. Douglas joins NSRC from the National Science Teachers Assn.(NSTA), where she had been assistant executive director since 2003. Prior to NSTA, Douglas spent four years at the National Science Foundation, where she was a program director in the elementary, secondary and informal education division. Headquartered in Washington DC, NSRC was formed by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Academies to improve learning and teaching of science for all students. Douglas will oversee the design, development and evaluation of external relations and outreach programs for NSRC’s three Centers of Excellence.

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The Partnership for Public Service, which seeks to revitalize the federal government by inspiring a new generation to serve and by transforming the way government works, announced Oct.29 that **Vince Micone** and **Tina Sung** have joined the organization. Micone is vice president for development, and Sung is vice president for government transformation. Micone was most recently assistant director for programs and external relations at Justice Dept. Sung, a leader in workplace performance with over 20 years experience, is the immediate past president & CEO of the American Society for Training & Development. While serving in government, she co-created the Federal Quality Institute.

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