

SPC Update . . .

As a new, regular feature to the FASEB Newsletter, we will be highlighting the activities of the Science Policy Committee. Previously known as the Public Affairs Advisory Committee, this group was recently transformed into the SPC in an effort to focus on long-term policy issues that will effect the Federation. (For more details on the charge of the SPC, see the April 1999 issue of the *FASEB Newsletter*.)

Plans Set for FASEB Conference on Physician-Scientists

Concern over physician-scientists and their future in biomedical research has been at the forefront of policy debates in recent months, prompting articles in leading scientific journals and the in-depth exploration of this issue at the FASEB Federal Funding Consensus Conference last December. FASEB leaders felt this issue sufficiently important to convene a meeting devoted entirely to this subject. This conference, entitled *Physician-Scientists and Career Opportunities for Biomedical Research*, will be held on June 15-16 at the FASEB headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland.

The conference will examine trends in the supply of critical research personnel. In a morning session, conference participants will hear from experts who will address three main themes:

- Physician-Scientists: Why Do They Matter?
- The Fate of the Physician-Scientist
- Opportunities for Synergy Between MDs and PhDs

The meeting will conclude with a closed-door FASEB session where conference participants will formulate a recommended plan of action on behalf of the Federation. Leon Rosenberg, Princeton University; Michael Welsh, University of Iowa College of Medicine; Stuart Kornfeld and Timothy Ley, Washington University School of Medicine; Tamara Zemlo and Howard Garrison, FASEB Office of Public Affairs; Dan Foster, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center; Franklin Bunn, Brigham & Women's Hospital, Boston; Charles Flexner, Johns Hopkins University; Ken Shine, Institute of Medicine; James Wyngaarden, former Director of NIH; and Conference Co-Chair Nicola Partridge, St. Louis University, are among the presenters at this event.

SPC Considering a Survey on Instrumentation Needs

The Science Policy Committee is planning to address the lack of direct information on the status of laboratory equipment and instrumentation. The SPC is considering a variety of ways to acquire this information, including the development of a survey that would poll scientists directly as to their instrumentation needs.

The survey would ask researchers a variety of questions, such as: What are your most critical

instrumentation needs? What is the biggest impediment to getting instruments? How difficult has it been to replace obsolete instruments? How much would it cost to bring instrumentation in your lab and institutional shared resources up to desired levels?

David Speicher, PhD, chair of the SPC's Subcommittee on Instrumentation and Infrastructure Needs believes that this kind of survey is necessary given the accelerated pace of scientific discoveries and technology development in biomedical research today. "It is critically important that researchers have the necessary instrumentation both in their laboratories and in specialized shared resources to fully utilize current and emerging technologies in pursuit of research opportunities in the next century," stated Speicher. "A systematic, statistically significant survey of principal investigators should provide reliable data in support of appropriate funding mechanisms to meet these needs."

FASEB members are invited to share their thoughts and ideas on the development of an instrumentation survey with the SPC representative from their society. (A list of SPC representatives is available at www.faseb.org/adhoc.html).

FASEB Asks Scientists for Input on Regulatory Burden

The Regulatory Burden Subcommittee of the Science Policy Committee is asking for help in obtaining information from scientists on how regulatory burden impacts their ability to perform NIH-funded research. In an April 13 letter to the presidents of all FASEB Societies, J.R. Haywood, chair of the Regulatory Burden Subcommittee, has asked these individuals for examples from their members on ways regulations affect their day-to-day ability to do research. The subcommittee would also welcome any advice as to how some of this burden may be alleviated, without diminishing the intended level of protections.

"Our subcommittee hopes to use this information to develop a series of FASEB policy papers on regulatory burden," Haywood wrote. "We plan to compile a total of five reports documenting the Federation's perspective on regulations associated with the following areas: 1) Animal care and use, 2) Financial conflict of interest, 3) Research integrity, 4) Human subjects protection, and 5) Hazardous waste disposal." These five areas were identified in a recent NIH report on regulatory burden that was compiled under the direction of Jack Mahoney (available at www.nih.gov/grants/policy/regulatoryburden/default.htm.) In addition, the subcommittee wants to develop recommendations to reduce duplicative and unnecessary federal regulations that govern extramural scientific research.

Input from bench scientists will be critical to helping the subcommittee develop FASEB's viewpoint on the topic of regulatory burden. Members of FASEB societies wishing to share their perspectives on regulations in these five issue areas should contact Tamara Zemlo, PhD, in FASEB's Office of Public Affairs at (301) 571-0657 or tzemlo@opa.faseb.org.

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