

DOE Reaches 1,000 CRADA Goal

The U.S. Department of Energy reached its goal of 1,000 cooperative research and development agreements (CRADAs) in August 1994, a year earlier than projected by Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary. The cost-shared tech-transfer partnerships between DOE's national laboratories and industry and academia now number more than 1,018. And, according to DOE sources, interest by potential partners shows no signs of slowing.

The first 1,000 CRADAs are valued at \$1.9 billion, with industry picking up about 56% of the total. The number and value of the CRADAs increased rapidly over the last year as DOE streamlined the approval process, made terms and conditions more user friendly, and broadened the technical support available. The use of common procedural steps and legal agreements across the department helped halve CRADA processing time from an average of 32 weeks to 16 weeks.

Of the total number of CRADAs signed as of August 31, about 197 are concentrated in 14 large U.S. companies; another 106 companies have two to six CRADAs with the DOE.

A block of 87 CRADAs, with a total value exceeding \$277 million, is connected to industry consortium programs targeted at specific areas. The largest of these is AMTEX, with 27 CRADAs. Other agreements in this category include the California Institute for Energy Efficient Sponsors (22), the U.S. Council for Automotive Research (21), the National Center for Manufacturing Sciences (8), Sematech (5) [see *PressTime Update*], and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturing Association of U.S.A. (4). Industry resources in this group of CRADAs show an average 59% cost share rather than the overall average industry share of 56%.

Industry participation in the program has grown more diverse, with partners representing 43 states. More than one-third of all the agreements now involve small or minority-owned businesses. In the first half of 1992, only 19% of the CRADAs issued involved small businesses.

The technologies represented by DOE CRADAs span manufacturing, advanced materials, environmental, communications, and health care technologies.

Because most CRADAs have a life span of three or more years, the first ones, implemented in 1991, are just beginning to mature. Initial results from partners' commercialization of the results from the CRADAs should be available in the near future.

Technology transfer policies and performance evaluations are overseen by DOE's Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Technology Partnerships and Economic Competitiveness. Created in June 1994, this office is directed by Charles B. Curtis.

The 1,000th DOE CRADA

The 1,000th CRADA signed by the U.S. Department of Energy involves Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Research International. The aim is to test a rechargeable battery thinner than plastic wrap for use in a credit-card size device that can detect the presence of hazardous gas. The device, which could be clipped onto a worker's clothing, has significant market potential in the United States and abroad. Other applications for such rechargeable batteries include medical devices, hearing aids, watches, and satellites.

NSF Reauthorized

On May 4, the House passed a bill to reauthorize the National Science Foundation at \$3.2 billion for fiscal 1995 and \$3.4 billion for fiscal 1996. On September 23, the Senate Commerce Committee also approved a bill to reauthorize the NSF at \$3.5 billion in fiscal year 1995, gradually increasing the amount over the next five years to reach an authorization level of \$5.1 billion in fiscal 1999.

The final appropriation bill (passed by the House and Senate and expected to be signed by President Clinton about press time) provides almost \$3.4 billion for the NSF in fiscal 1995. Within this budget, the allocation for research and related activities is \$2,280 million.

Both the House and Senate authorization bills had recommended increased spending for construction of academic research facilities, and this translated into \$250 million in the fiscal 1995 appropriation bill. The fiscal 1994 budget is \$105 million and the Administration's fiscal 1995 request was \$55 million.

A condition, however, is attached to the appropriation because "the conferees are deeply concerned about the continued staggering need to address the academic infrastructure backlog in facilities and instrumentation." Unless the NSF requests at least \$250 million for academic research infrastructure activities in the fiscal 1996 budget, the "extra funds" appropriated for fiscal 1995 (\$131.9 million) will be rescinded on July 15, 1995.

Of the \$250 million provided for fiscal 1995, the conference report designates \$118.1 million "for the standard NSF facilities and instrumentation modernization program, equally divided between the two activities." The remaining \$131.9 million, available for the period from September 1, 1995 (the last month of fiscal 1995) through August 31, 1996, "should be allocated for a new interagency facilities and instrumentation modernization program managed by the NSF." Twenty percent of both pots should be allocated to smaller colleges and universities, including historically black colleges and universities, and institutions with an established record of recruitment, retention, and graduation of predominantly underrepresented groups in science and technology.

The conference report also states that the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), with the cooperation of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), should develop a five-year interagency research infrastructure strategy. "The strategy should also specify how increasing numbers of federal science and technology agencies would participate in similar activities modeled on merit review selection."

University Research Funding Cut by \$200 Million

On September 29, the House and Senate agreed to a conference report on a \$243.7 billion appropriations bill that restores some of the Defense-Department-sponsored university research funding that had been slated for elimination. \$90 million (50%) had been marked for deletion from a \$1.8 billion request. The appropriation request now stands at \$1.6 billion.

The conference report, expresses concern about universities' overhead charges on Defense research contracts. The report directs the Secretary of Defense "to submit a report to the congressional defense committees by February 1, 1995, which outlines the actions the Defense Department plans to take to address these concerns." □

PRESSTIME UPDATE: Sematech has just announced a plan to wean itself from its \$90 million annual federal appropriation, which was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee in August. Member companies will continue supplying \$90 million each year, and Sematech does plan to compete for federal research grants to replace the matching congressional outlay.