America COMPETES Bill Stalled in House
(or, How Pornography Affects Basic Research)

The America COMPETES Reauthorization bill (HR 5116): which passed out of committee on April 28 – and appeared to be headed to passage by the full House soon thereafter – has stalled in the House (see Dispatch 5-7-10). As AIP reported on May 20, “the legislation has not moved off the House floor following two unsuccessful votes on its passage….When H.R. 5116 came to the floor Republicans criticized the $85.6 billion bill for expanding the authorization period from three years to five years, the authorization of spending increases for the three agencies [NSF, DOE Office of Science, NIST], the authorization of six new programs, for what they characterized as a shift from basic research and development to a focus on technology commercialization, and an increased emphasis on global warming.” When time came for the first vote by the full House, the ranking minority member of the House Science and Technology committee made a motion to recommit – which essentially sends the bill back to the originating committee with instructions on how to amend the bill. The motion passed. A second bill was then introduced (using a different number so as not to be constrained by the amendments in the motion to recommit) which addressed several but not all of the concerns of the minority party, but when brought to a vote did not pass under the rules of the House.

Read the link above to understand how pornography relates to basic research funding and STEM education, and the role it played in killing the COMPETES reauthorization … for the moment.

AIP is now reporting that House Science and Technology Chairman Gordon will bring the bill to the floor again in the near future. “Accompanying H.R. 5116 is a 1,233 page report from the Science Committee with the text of the bill, material related to the committee and subcommittee’s activities, dissenting views, and an expansive statement about the provisions of the 222-page bill. The explanatory statement is important reading as it provides the committee’s views regarding the programs of the Department of Energy’s Office of Science, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. House Report 111-478 may be viewed here.” The AIP link provides a page guide to help find sections of interest in the bill. (Original Sources: AIP newsletter)
(Contains New Program on Tech Commercialization)

The House Armed Services Committee: has completed work on its version of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2011. As reported by AIP, “H.R. 5136 sets defense policy, authorizes programs and military construction, establishes troop levels, and guides the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee in the development of the FY 2011 funding bill. The bill authorizes the President’s request of $725.9 billion.” The bill also includes language for a new program focused on tech commercialization efforts. The Department of Defense Rapid Innovation Program (section 1054 of the House bill) states that, “The Secretary of Defense shall establish a program to accelerate the fielding of innovative technologies developed using Department of Defense research funding and the commercialization of such technologies,” and goes on to describe how commands can apply for the funds, where the funds will come from and how the program will be managed and reported on. The Senate has yet to finish its version of the bill. (Original Sources: AIP newsletter, Thomas web site, SBIR Insider newsletter)

University Groups Send Letter to the Administration
(Responding to Efforts on University Research Commercialization)

Five university associations recently sent a letter to OSTP: commenting on current administration efforts to address university technology commercialization. As summarized in Tech Transfer Tactics, “the comment letter — signed by AAU, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, the American Council on Education, the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the Council on Governmental Relations — stresses the importance of balancing knowledge creation with increased commercialization and described the ways universities contribute to economic development beyond technology licensing. The letter focuses on the importance of maintaining the Bayh-Dole Act as the legal framework for university technology commercialization. The associations also suggested that policymakers reconsider government restrictions on the reimbursement of university research administrative costs, provide supplemental grants to support the translation of research with a high potential for commercialization, and expand federal tax credits to better promote research commercialization.” (Original Sources: Tech Transfer Tactics newsletter)

New From the NSF

Federal Funds for Research and Development Fiscal Years 2007-09, provides tabular statistical data on federal R&D outlays and obligations, by character of work (basic, applied, development, plant), agency, field of science or engineering, geographical area, and performer. Data for FY 2009 do not contain the additional R&D funding provided by the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, public law 111-5). SSTI has provided a table from this and other NSF data highlighting federal R&D obligations to industry by state (2001 -2007). See their summary and table here. (Original Sources: NSF web site, SSTI web site)
Spotlight on FLC Members’ Publications

Article: Commercial Licensing of HIV-1 Protease: Applications of the NIH Research Tools Policy
Authors: George H. Keller; Steven M. Ferguson (FLC NIH Agency Representative)
Abstract: “Licensing of the HIV-1 protease gene by the NIH Office of Technology Transfer (OTT) provides an example of the effective use of the principles of the NIH Research Tools Policy, which was designed to provide broad access to important biomedical technologies. The OTT licensing experience is presented in detail as it was applied to research reagents, diagnostics and drug development to thus enhance the overall development process for a wide variety of medical products.” (Original Sources: NIH OTT web site)

Note: If you or staff have published on tech transfer in academic journals, major association journals, etc. (looking for items beyond monthly newsletter articles), feel free to forward them to me and I will highlight them as appropriate in future Dispatches.

Technology Transfer Fiction

For those who don’t get enough tech transfer in their work day: there is now a work of fiction out by journalist Daniel Greenberg focused on university tech transfer titled … Tech Transfer. From the Amazon blurb, “Though high in national ranking, Kershaw University is a dysfunctional institution. Its geriatric president is afflicted by dementia. The faculty is embroiled in bitter vendettas. The students, when not partying or sleeping late, are in rebellion. And, under an Army contract in a secret lab on campus, Kershaw's star scientist is developing an anti-sleep drug to keep troops permanently awake. Hot on the trail, a dropout scientist working for an investment firm schemes to buy up the secret formula, with time out only for his hyper-busy love life.” Read a review in Inside Higher Ed here. (Original Sources: Inside Higher Ed web site, Amazon web site)

Note: The DC Dispatch is a periodic update of selected items of interest to the FLC and technology transfer community -- i.e., current legislation, trends, reports, policy and other developments potentially affecting technology transfer or related activities -- designed to keep the community informed of relevant issues on a timely basis. Information is gleaned directly from a variety of sources (newsletters, email alerts, web sites, direct participation at events from the FLC DC Representative’s office, etc.) -- with original sources, contacts and links provided.