

ties in a university, externally sponsored or not; and this reality should be directly felt by every actor on the university stage, whether externally sponsored or not.

What is needed is an "overhead for all" policy, in which every expenditure of funds on a university campus either bears overhead or is part of the overhead. Each academic department, for example, should receive a departmental budget enlarged over its present budget by approximately the current indirect cost rate. It should then pay overhead at the appropriate rate as it expends its funds for faculty salaries, teaching assistants, office supplies or whatever, exactly as we sponsored researchers now do. When I pay a research assistant from contract funds, I pay overhead; when the History Department pays a graduate assistant from a foundation grant, it should explicitly pay overhead on those expenditures also. (It's of course irrelevant to argue that "foundations won't pay overhead." Somebody pays those indirect costs, somehow.) Note that I call for no necessary change in allocation of resources within the university, only for a change in how this is accomplished.

Perhaps the most important virtue of this scheme would be to make the reality of indirect costs apparent to all, and to give all of us an equal motive for reducing them. The motivation of faculty members to keep university costs down becomes far stronger when they realize that overhead cuts directly into their spendable funds than when their indirect costs are simply covered by the university without their explicitly knowing about it.

A second advantage would be to increase the perceived fairness of the system. Those of us in heavily outside-sponsored engineering and science, and those in the nonsponsored humanities, would visibly all be in the same boat together. Universities frequently claim that government contracts do not in fact pay all their real indirect costs. The university might thus have a "university overhead rate" even higher than the federally allowed rate. Those of us in science and engineering, and in humanities, would equally have to negotiate for university funds or make other arrangements to cover the excess indirect costs.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this proposal would not involve extensive new accounting and record-keeping costs. To justify their indirect cost rates on government-sponsored projects now, universities must carefully record all indirect costs, and then make a complex allocation of these between sponsored and nonsponsored activi-

ties. "Overhead for all" is already being calculated. What we need to do is make it explicitly visible, and visibly fair—and then all set about reducing it.

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Hampered participation

The American Physical Society Committee on Opportunities in Physics would like to determine the dimensions of a problem that has come to its attention—a problem which can make it very difficult for physicists employed in certain government agencies and laboratories to participate in professional activities of the Society. The Committee has learned of several instances in which local management has imposed complex, limiting and time-consuming regulations in situations where the employee would normally be reimbursed in whole or in part by the American Physical Society for travel and living expenses while on Society business. Taking part in Society affairs on personal time does not appear to ameliorate the situation. It is even necessary for an officer of the Society to write a letter of invitation and justification for each instance of participation.

If the problem is sufficiently widespread, the Committee would prefer to appeal more generally for relief to an appropriate federal agency or official, rather than to deal with individual cases. To this end, the Committee asks that those physicists whose participation in Society affairs has been hampered seriously by such regulations write to the undersigned at 2159 Orchard Park Drive, Schenectady, New York 12309. Replies will be kept confidential if those writing so desire.

RALPH A. ALPHER
Chairman APS Committee on
Opportunities in Physics

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Anonymous refereeing

Having been an author and referee for American Physical Society journals for more than 30 years, having served as a member of the Publication Committee of the Society, having served as Associate Editor of the *Physical Review*, and now in my third year as Editor of *Physical Review Letters*, I found a certain antic charm in Christopher Sherman's description (January, page 15) of the editorial judgment of papers in APS journals as roughly parallel to the judgment of heretics by the Spanish Inquisition and, especially, in Sherman's assurance that all of the refereeing problems of the journals can be solved with simple procedural changes which Sherman will explain to us—if we will

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