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—WILLIAM SWEET

NEW LAB CONTRACTS CONCLUDED BETWEEN DOE AND U OF CAL

Last November the US Department of Energy and the University of California concluded new five-year contracts governing the university's management of three major national labs, Lawrence Berkeley, Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore—a matter that has been the subject of considerable contention within the University of California community in years past. Now that the ink is dry on the agreement, it seems apparent that the university stands to benefit from several novel aspects of the accord, and the labs may do better as well.

The involvement of the University of California in nuclear weapons work has always rubbed some university people the wrong way, and the contract negotiation cycle usually has been punctuated in recent decades by protests and calls upon the university to get out of the business. As recently as 1990 the faculty senate urged the regents to disassociate from the two weapons labs, a recommendation the regents chose to ignore.

Insiders to the negotiations say that the new agreement is not a standard Federal procurement contract. Although it is much closer to a standard Federal contract than the previous ones were, it contains many unique features that other national labs would be only too glad to obtain as well. At the same time, all parties to the new agreement describe it as "win-win" for both the university and DOE.

The contracts:

- ▷ codify protection of intellectual freedoms associated with research at the labs, a matter that sometimes gave rise to disputes in the past
- ▷ maintain the traditional public service relationship between the university and DOE on a no-gain, no-loss basis
- ▷ establish a high-level advisory

committee to counsel the university on laboratory management and strategic directions and on the quality of scientific and technical work being performed

▷ set up a unit within the office of the university president to strengthen oversight of procurement and property management, environmental health and safety, and so on, based on agreed-upon performance standards

▷ create a procedure for resolving issues between the labs and the university and DOE

▷ and, not least, encourage more directed research at the labs by the university.

The university's allowance from DOE for overhead and management, which in the past has been negotiated yearly, most recently was about \$12–13 million. The new contracts provide for close to \$30 million, with \$14 million reserved for management of risks associated with regulatory liabilities to which the university is exposed under the new contracts. If not required for meeting added expenses of this type, the funds would be available for university-directed research.

Naturally there is some apprehension at the labs that the new administrative unit in the president's office may turn out to be a major pain in the neck. Robert Kuckuck, the Livermore veteran who heads the office, says that it will have a "corporate headquarters/gatekeeper function" and will stress "performance-based management" and a "self-assessment/self-correction cycle."

Charles Shank, the director of Lawrence Berkeley, worries that new administrative requirements will be more onerous for LBL than for the weapons labs, which have larger budgets and therefore can handle increased overhead costs. Still, Shank feels the new conflict resolution process is a big plus.

Shank does not expect the new contract arrangements to have much impact on the way LBL redefines its mission, something he says the lab already is doing "in response to changing national expectations for science." At Livermore the situation could be the reverse. Robert Borchers, assistant to the LLNL director for university relations, points out that the new contract is "permeated with the idea that there ought to be closer scientific collaboration between the university and the labs as classified programs diminish and programs having to do with economic competitiveness come to the fore."

In the past year LLNL director John Nuckolls has established an

expanded nonproliferation program under Robert Andrews, an energy program under David Baldwin and an environmental program under James Davis. Borchers expects to see an expansion of university-laboratory research institutes in areas such as environmental science and risk assessment, accelerator mass spectrometry, and lasers and optics.

In addition to Kuckuck's administrative unit, which will employ about 30 people, the university also continues to have a unit in the president's office responsible for programmatic affairs at the labs. Currently in charge of the unit is acting head Tommy Ambrose, who presumably will report to Walter Massey. Massey, who leaves the National Science Foundation this month (see page 74), has been named senior vice president and provost for the whole University of California system.

Sidney Drell, deputy director of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, heads the Council on the National Laboratories as well as its subpanel on national security affairs, which will advise the university's president, Jack Peltason. Drell says creation of the council is "a very significant step, particularly because the council has broader oversight responsibilities with respect to strategic planning than the university has ever previously undertaken." Drell thinks this structure deserves to be emulated at other major labs.

According to its charter, the council has three main functions: to review strategic plans of the labs as they change their research agendas; to review the scientific and technical quality of work undertaken at the labs; and to foster an atmosphere conducive to scientific inquiry and the development of new knowledge.

—WILLIAM SWEET

CHINA PRESSED ON RIGHTS IN CHANGED POLITICAL CONTEXT

In his acceptance speech at the Democratic convention last July, in the one paragraph devoted to foreign policy, candidate Bill Clinton said he would no longer "coddle tyrants, from Baghdad to Beijing." It was not lost on human rights activists that of the four countries mentioned in that single short paragraph, one was China.

Evidently it was not lost on the Chinese government, either. On 17 February the government announced it was releasing Wang Dan, who had been first on the list of 21 most-