

A New NSF Deputy Director, Musical Chairs at NASA and Two Staffers Join House Science Policy Study

On 8 January, President Clinton announced his intention to nominate **Rita R. Colwell**, president of the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute and professor of microbiology at the university, as deputy director of the National Science Foundation (NSF). The position of deputy director, which included the function of chief operating officer of the agency in recent years, has been vacant since the departure of **Anne Petersen**, who became senior vice president for programs at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in September 1996. Since then, **Joseph Bordogna**, who was NSF's assistant director for engineering, has been the acting deputy director.

"Getting Colwell to accept the offer to be NSF's deputy director is a real achievement," says a long-time NSF staffer. "She'll bring new luster to a position that hasn't often been filled by scientists of renown." Colwell is known internationally for her research on marine biotechnology and the molecular genetics of marine and estuarine bacteria. In addition, her studies on the microbiology of the Chesapeake Bay have alerted environmentalists and politicians in Maryland and nearby states to toxic pollutants.

Colwell holds an MS in genetics from Purdue University and a PhD in marine microbiology from the University of Washington. If the Senate confirms her nomination, which is deemed likely because of her extensive research experience and her strong backing by Maryland's senators, Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski, she will be the first biologist in the top ranks of NSF, which has been led for most of its nearly 50 years by physicists, chemists and engineers.

Her career has been enhanced by leadership positions in several scientific societies—notably as president of the American Society for Microbiology, the International Union of Microbiological Societies, Sigma Xi and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She served on the National Science Board in 1983–90 and therefore is familiar with many major NSF programs and practices.

Few NASA insiders were surprised when Administrator Dan Goldin appointed **Joseph H. Rothenberg**, director of the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, to head the agency's beleaguered office of space flight, succeeding **Wilbur C.**

Trafton, who resigned unexpectedly in November (see PHYSICS TODAY, January, page 46). Rothenberg, whose appointment began on 12 January, less than a week after Goldin's announcement, is NASA's fourth space flight chief in the last three years.

Considered by NASA insiders as one of Goldin's "good old boys," Rothenberg is the first space flight chief since the late 1960s who does not come out of space shuttle or space station program management, the astronaut corps or military aviation. The office he now heads accounts for about 40% of NASA's \$13.6 billion budget for the current fiscal year. In his announcement, Goldin stated that Rothenberg "brings a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective" to the human space flight program. Goldin praised Rothenberg's leadership of Goddard over the past three years, and said, "I've asked him to turn his talents to another set of challenges."

Rothenberg joined Goddard in 1983 as operations manager for the Hubble Space Telescope and led the team that developed the telescope's orbital operations. In 1989, he became deputy director of mission operations and data systems, and the following year, he was appointed associate director of flight projects for the Hubble telescope. In that job, he led the 1993 repair mission to correct a spherical aberration in the orbiting telescope's main mirror. The repair required astronauts to replace the wide-field/planetary camera with a new one designed at Caltech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory to provide optical corrections for the defects in the mirror.

Rothenberg earned a BS in engineering science and an MS in engineering management from C. W. Post College of Long Island University, and he worked at Cape Canaveral as a Grumman Aerospace engineer in the 1960s.

Goldin also announced that **Alphonso V. (Al) Diaz**, Rothenberg's deputy at Goddard, would step into the director's office at the facility, one of NASA's nine major field centers across the country. Diaz, who holds an MS in physics from Old Dominion University and an MS in management from MIT's Sloan School of Management, joined NASA in 1964 as a cooperative education student at the Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, and he was involved in a variety of jobs in the Viking Project from 1969 to 1977. He then moved to NASA headquarters,

where he had a hand in managing the Ulysses and Galileo missions.

In the late 1980s, Diaz left NASA to work for General Electric's government services organization, then returned to NASA headquarters as Leonard Fisk's deputy in the planetary program. After Goldin took over NASA in 1992 and broke up Fisk's operations, Fisk left for the University of Michigan, and Diaz, in 1996, was dispatched to Goddard as Rothenberg's second.

Though Goddard is NASA's leading center for Earth science mission management, it also is deeply involved in the Hubble Space Telescope and Explorer missions. To Diaz, Goddard's future includes developing the next-generation space telescope and x-ray and gamma-ray telescopes. "Our great strength is in developing new tools and processes for the next generation of discoveries in physics and astronomy," he says. NASA's schedule calls for the successor to the Hubble telescope to be launched in 2007, even though the Hubble is expected to operate until 2010. At a session at the American Astronomical Society meeting in Washington last month, there was near unanimity that the new telescope be named for the late Lyman Spitzer Jr of Princeton University.

The House science policy study being conducted by Representative Vern Ehlers, a Michigan Republican, has hired two staff members—**Mike Champness**, a major in the US Air Force Reserve who spent seven years as a legislative assistant to Senator Phil Gramm, a Texas Republican, and **Njema Frazier**, who joined the Democratic staff of the House Science Committee last year after receiving a PhD in nuclear physics from Michigan State University.

Champness graduated from the University of Michigan in 1982 with a BS in aerospace engineering and then got a master's degree in public administration from Ohio State University in 1987. In Gramm's office, he helped draft the National Research Investment Act of 1997, which Gramm introduced early last year to double Federal funding for scientific research in the next decade.

Frazier worked as a research assistant at the National Superconducting Cyclotron Lab at Michigan State and as a physics tutor at the university's College of Natural Sciences from 1993 to 1997. **IRWIN GOODWIN ■**