cist Steven Koonin, provost at Caltech and chairman of JASON. The agreement with DDR&E, signed on 10 May and running through the end of the year, will be managed by the MITRE Corp, as was the organization's previous contract.

JASON is an independent group of about 50 top scientists from a variety of fields, all tenured professors from major research universities, who meet for several weeks each summer to tackle difficult scientific problems posed for them by several federal agencies. The organization began as an elite advisory group for the government in the early days of the cold war.

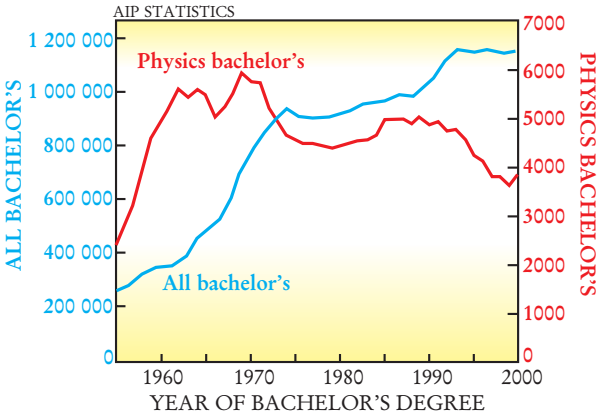
Late last year, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which had held the JASON contract for many years, insisted that two executives from Silicon Valley high-tech companies and an engineer be granted membership to JASON. The organization balked, saying the three did not meet the rigorous membership standards. DARPA officials then charged that JASON was too physics-oriented, and canceled the contract (see PHYSICS TODAY, May 2002, page 29.)

Although JASON will work through DDR&E, initially on aerospace and fuel-cell technology problems, the organization will also study issues for the Department of Energy and other agencies, Koonin said, including some related to counterterrorism. "We have about 15 studies to work on right now," he said, "and about 50% of our work is classified." As they have for many years, JASON scientists will meet in La Jolla, California, from mid-June through early August. **JIM DAWSON**

Physics Bachelor's Degree Production Rose in 2000

In 2000, the number of physics bachelor's degrees conferred in the US was 7% higher than during the previous year, the first increase in nearly a decade. Similar increases are expected for 2001 and 2002, for which data are not yet available, according to a recent report from the American Institute of Physics. The report also cites growing enrollments in high-school physics classes as boding well for future undergraduate physics enrollments.

The total number of physics bachelor's degrees awarded nationwide in 1999 and 2000 was 3646 and 3849, respectively, representing about 0.3% of the bachelor's degrees awarded across



all fields during those years. The increase in 2000 was mostly in large physics departments that also offer graduate degrees—the same departments that saw the biggest losses in the 1990s, when physics bachelor's degree production fell by 27%.

Women earned 21% of physics bachelor's degrees in the combined classes of 1999 and 2000, 6% more than a decade earlier. Of the 94% of 1999 and 2000 physics bachelor's degree recipients who were US citizens, 14% were members of a minority group: 5% were African American; 5% Asian American; 2% Hispanic; and 2% Other. Nearly three-quarters of physics bachelor's recipients participated in research during their undergraduate years.

The percentage of physics bachelors proceeding directly to graduate studies in physics was 35% for the combined classes of 1999 and 2000, slightly higher than in previous years. Of those, a striking 62% say they want to pursue an academic career.

In astronomy, that fraction is even higher: 81% of 1999 and 2000 baccalaureates who are pursuing advanced degrees in physics or astronomy have their eye on an academic career. In 1999 and 2000, universities awarded 195 and 202 astronomy bachelor's degrees, respectively; one-third went to women.

These and other data can be found in the *Physics and Astronomy Senior Report: Classes of 1999 and 2000*, available free of charge from AIP, Statistical Research Center, One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740; e-mail stats@aip.org; Web site http://www.aip.org/statistics/trends/undtrends.htm.

NEWS NOTES

Four ITER sites. With plans for the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor accelerating, bids to host it are piling up. The latest site bid came on 4 June from Japan, which chose Rokkasho, on the northern tip of the island of Honshu, from three possible sites. Europe, meanwhile, must decide whether to put forward for consideration a site in Spain, south of Barcelona, or one in southern France, at the Cadarache nuclear research center, near Aix-en-Provence. Canada, too, is keen to host the $4 billion project, which is being developed by Europe, Japan, Russia, and Canada and is intended to demonstrate the feasibility of fusion energy. The negotiations on ITER's site, organizational structure, and costs are progressing well and are supposed to be completed within the year, according to a physicist close to the issue, "but there's a lot to be done to meet the deadline." —TF

New directors at NIH. Roderic Pettigrew has been tapped as the first permanent director of the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, the newest addition to the National Institutes of Health (see PHYSICS TODAY, September 2001, page 25).


JACK KEARSE/EMORY U.

PETTIGREW

Known for his work on dynamic, three-dimensional imaging of the heart, Pettigrew holds an MD from the University of Miami and a PhD in applied radiation physics from MIT. He will move to NIBIB at the end of the summer from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, where he heads the Emory Center for Magnetic Resonance Research.

More than two years after Harold Varmus stepped down, NIH's top job has also been filled: On 20 May, Elias Zerhouni of Johns Hopkins University took the reins from acting director Ruth Kirschstein. —TF

Maryland theory center. Condensed matter theory at the University of Maryland, College Park, just got a shot in the arm: The university's College of Computer, Mathematical and Physical