

news notes

Big gift to Texas A&M. In times when money is tight all around, a gift like the \$20 million to Texas A&M University in College Station is appreciated more than ever. The money, from George P. Mitchell and the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation, goes to the university's Mitchell Institute for Fundamental Physics and Astronomy. Founded a decade ago with an initial \$1 million, the institute brings together theoretical and experimental high-energy physics, astronomy, and cosmology. As an endowment, the \$20 million is expected to generate about \$800 000 a year.

Such money has flexibility not available with most grants. It will be used to hire postdoctoral researchers; host workshops, seminars, and visitors; explore new ideas; and conduct outreach programs with high school teachers. By bringing in more visitors and fostering scientific interactions, says Mitchell Institute interim director Bhaskar Dutta, "we can make some very important contributions to science."

A 1940 Texas A&M petroleum engineering alumnus, Mitchell and his foundation have now given a total of \$95 million to the university. Most of that has been for physics and astron-

omy, including \$33.5 million toward the \$700 million international Giant Magellan Telescope. It also includes money for the statistics and petroleum engineering departments and for an outdoor tennis center. TF

ARRA props up university R&D.

In the US, fiscal year 2011 saw a total increase in university R&D spending of 6.3%, to a record \$65.1 billion; nearly 63% of that came from federal sources. The life sciences grew 6.6% to \$37.2 billion. The next-best funded area was engineering, which grew 7.7% to \$10 billion. Spending in the physical sciences rose 3.5% to nearly \$4.8 billion. Those and related data are spelled out in *Universities Report Highest-Ever R&D Spending of \$65 Billion in FY 2011*, a survey released by NSF on 26 November 2012 (see <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/infbrief/nsf13305>).

The increase in R&D money is the good news. The bad—or at least troubling—news is that the increase was thanks largely to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The final ARRA money is supposed to be spent by the end of September 2013, and in the current budget climate it's hard to imagine research funding remaining strong without it. TF ■

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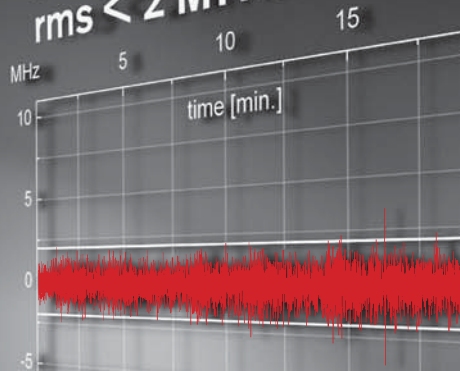
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