

POLICY

Harassment policy

Institutions that receive grant monies from the US National Science Foundation (NSF) must now inform the agency if they find that anyone funded by an NSF grant has committed sexual harassment. The policy, which the NSF announced on 8 February, also requires institutions to report if researchers are placed on administrative leave related to harassment allegations or findings, and to lay out clear rules defining inappropriate behaviour. The requirements will take effect after a 60-day public-comment period ends. US government research agencies generally do not require grant recipients or their employers to disclose sexual-harassment allegations or findings. See go.nature.com/2euvrrr for more.

POLITICS

US budget request

Funding for the US National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation would remain flat in fiscal year 2019, under the budget request released on 12 February by President Donald Trump. But his plan would slash funds for the Environmental Protection Agency to US\$6.1 billion — the lowest level since the 1990s — ending the agency's climate research. The proposal would also gut climate programmes at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and cancel five Earth-observing missions or instruments at NASA. See page 284 for more.

Research threat

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has declared that the seas around the country are off-limits to foreign

researchers. In a press conference on 9 February, Duterte said he would order the navy to fire on any foreign vessels found extracting resources from the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Under a 1982 United Nations treaty, countries have exclusive economic rights to an area extending 200 nautical miles (370 kilometres) from their shores, but foreign research vessels are often granted access. A spokesperson for Duterte said that future missions should be done by Filipinos; this would cut off nations that have previously done research in the area, such as China, Japan, South Korea and the United States. The Philippines' EEZ

includes the seismically active Benham Rise, which the nation renamed the Philippine Rise last year.

PUBLISHING

Leadership row

More than 70 members of the editorial board of the *Journal of Molecular Medicine* have quit over a disagreement with the publisher about the appointment of a new editor-in-chief. The journal's long-time editor-in-chief, German pharmacologist Detlev Ganten, retired last year. Journal editors recommended Martin Lohse of the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in Berlin as his successor.

But the publisher, Springer Nature, instead appointed Ari Waisman, an immunologist at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz in Germany. (*Nature's* news team is editorially independent of Springer Nature, which also publishes *Nature*.) As of 13 February, the *Journal of Molecular Medicine* listed 23 remaining editorial board members on its website.

Preprint server

The American Geophysical Union launched a major preprint server for the Earth sciences on 8 February. The Earth and Space Science Open Archive is a free community site for posting pre-publication findings, as well as conference



THOM BAUR/REUTERS

Falcon Heavy soars into the record books

SpaceX in Hawthorne, California, launched the most powerful commercial rocket ever on 6 February. Its 27-engine Falcon Heavy rocket lifted off from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida and propelled founder Elon Musk's electric sports car into a looping orbit around the Sun. Two of the rocket's three boosters successfully returned to Earth and landed,

marking another step towards SpaceX's goals of reusability. The third booster, however, crashed into the Atlantic Ocean when some of its engines did not ignite as planned. SpaceX streamed live images of Musk's car as it moved farther and farther from Earth, until a final engine burn sent it on a course that will eventually take it out near Mars.

PAUL YANG/FP/GETTY

presentations such as posters. A competing preprint server, EarthArXiv, has been operating since last October under the auspices of the Center for Open Science in Charlottesville, Virginia. They are the first major initiatives to test whether Earth scientists will embrace the open-posting model pioneered by sites such as the arXiv physics server.

EVENTS

Gender pay gap

Women who work at the Wellcome Trust — one of the world's largest biomedical charities — earn a median salary that is 21% lower than that of their male colleagues, the London-based organization said on 7 February. The gap is slightly wider than Britain's overall gender pay gap of 18%. Organizations in the United Kingdom that employ more than 250 people are now required by law to publish such information on pay. "We see our gender pay gap as one important measure of how much more we have to do to become a truly inclusive place to work," the trust said in a statement.

Taiwan earthquake

Officials have started recovery efforts following an earthquake that struck the east coast of Taiwan on 6 February,



killing 17 people and injuring at least 285. The US Geological Survey measured the earthquake at magnitude 6.4. The quake's epicentre occurred 18 kilometres north of Hualien, the most severely affected area. It caused major damage to some buildings, including a 12-storey residential complex that is now tilted (pictured) after the first four floors gave way. Taiwan experiences frequent quakes because it lies close to the intersection of three tectonic plates. As *Nature* went to press, Hualien was still experiencing aftershocks.

Isotope process

On 8 February, the US Food and Drug Administration approved a new technology for producing a common medical isotope without the use of enriched uranium. Technetium-99m is used

in roughly 80% of medical-imaging procedures in the United States, but the country has relied entirely on foreign imports for the past three decades. The global market has been rocked by shortages in recent years, however, caused in part by reactor closures abroad. NorthStar Medical Radioisotopes in Beloit, Wisconsin, uses naturally occurring molybdenum-98, which absorbs neutrons in a nuclear reactor and becomes molybdenum-99 — a source material that decays into technetium-99m.

FUNDING

Science budget cuts

The Brazilian government will freeze 10% of the budget for its Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovation and Communications, according to an analysis released on

6 February by the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science. The government announced an overall budget cut on 2 February, but it was several days before each ministry could confirm how much it would have to give up. The move will drain 477 million reais (US\$145 million) from the 4.6 billion reais already authorized for the ministry in 2018. Science minister Gilberto Kassab promised not to apply those cuts to research institutes for now, in the hope that the freeze will be at least partly reversed in the coming months.

PEOPLE

Astronomy move

The University of Turku in Finland terminated the employment contract of astrophysicist Christian Ott on 7 February. Ott resigned from the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena last year after the institution determined he had committed gender-based harassment of two graduate students. The University of Turku announced on 1 February that it had hired Ott, but reversed the decision after astronomers inside and outside Finland criticized the appointment. Through his lawyer, Ott declined to comment publicly on the matter.

Popular science

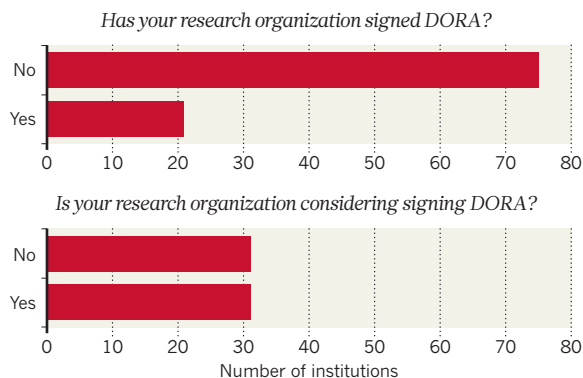
The Royal Institution of Great Britain has appointed a new director, it announced on 8 February. Civil engineer Shaun Fitzgerald will lead the London-based organization, which promotes public engagement in science and is known for its Christmas Lectures. His predecessor, gerontologist Sarah Harper, left the 219-year-old organization last September after less than four months in the job.

TREND WATCH

A survey of UK institutions reveals that many of them do not have policies to address the misuse of metrics such as impact factors in academic evaluations. The 2012 Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), a global accord that aims to eliminate such misuse, urges hiring and grant panels to assess the quality of research papers rather than the journals in which they are published. Out of 96 institutions surveyed, 75 said that they hadn't signed DORA or didn't have a research-metrics policy.

SHAKING UP METRICS CULTURE

Only 21 UK research organizations out of 96 said in a survey that they had signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), which promotes the responsible use of research metrics.



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