

CHRONICLE

The Center for Advanced Research in Biotechnology (CARB, Shady Grove, MD), long in the planning stage, has appointed a director. Kevin Ulmer, formerly vice president of advanced technologies at Genex Corp. (Rockville, MD), assumed the post at the beginning of April. CARB draws on the resources of universities, government, and industry to promote advanced studies on the biophysical properties of macromolecules. The Maryland state legislature recently approved funding for the center, budgeting 18 "hard money" positions that will be used to form CARB's core staff. Operations begin officially on July 1.

A new plant molecular biology center is being formed by Argonne National Laboratory (Argonne, IL) and Northern Illinois University (DeKalb). Along with the state of Illinois, the sponsors will invest more than \$1 million for the first year. Projects may include increasing the growth range of crop plants, and development of pest-resistant and chemical-synthesizing plant strains.

The National Science Foundation awarded Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge) up to \$20 million over five years to establish a Center for Biotechnology Process Engineering. The National Institutes of Health will also provide an initial grant of \$100,000. Directed by Daniel I. C. Wang, the Center will stress genetics and molecular biology; bioreactor design and operations; product isolation and purification; and biochemical process systems engineering.

New Jersey moves on biotech bond issue. NJ Governor Thomas Kean signed a bill authorizing a \$90-million bond issue, of which \$40 million will go to a new state biotechnology research institute.

Legislator outlines biotech policy. Congressman John D. Dingell (D-MI) called the Reagan administration's "Coordinated Framework for Regulation of Biotechnology" evidence of a "perverse determination to prove that the existing law will work." Dingell, chairman of the House Energy

and Commerce Committee, called for a three-pronged U.S. biotechnology policy: develop biotechnology, with special emphasis on public support of programs "that are socially useful but commercially unprofitable"; support basic research with government funds (and restore NIH grants targeted by the U.S. Office of Management and the Budget); and "end resistance to a serious look at the regulation of biotechnology." Dingell's committee could hold hearings on industrial development priorities in biotechnology this summer.

Public comments on Cabinet council regulatory proposals are now being analyzed, according to Bernadine Healy, deputy director of the executive Office of Science and Technology Policy. The "Coordinated Framework for the Regulation of Biotechnology," published in the December 31, 1984, *Federal Register*, has drawn about 85 replies to the OSTP. More than 100 other responses have gone into the five federal agencies (FDA, EPA, USDA, NIH, and NSF) covered by the proposal. "It is not clear yet how long it's going to take" to analyze the results, Healy says. Meanwhile, an informal council coordinates the biotech deliberations of EPA, FDA, and NIH.

Stanford University's genetic engineering licensing program has 11 new members, while four companies have dropped out. Merck, Becton Dickinson, Phillips Petroleum, BASF, California Biotechnology, Calgene, Genencor, Life Technologies, Syntro, ZymoGenetics, and Triton Biosciences took licenses on Stanford's core rDNA technology this year; Cetus, Universal Oil Products, Carter-Wallace, and Koppers terminated agreements. Seventy-three firms now have Stanford licenses.

New agreements involving biotechnology firms:

- American Home Products Corp.'s (New York, NY) Wyeth Laboratories Division will develop cardiovascular and diuretic agents with California Biotechnology (Mountain View, CA). Wyeth will soon begin Phase I clinical trials on CalBiotech's auriculon, a hormone that lowers blood pressure.

Separately, American Home Products bought 1 million shares of CalBiotech common stock, representing 15 percent of the company, for \$12 million. CalBiotech equity has been selling for just below \$10 a share.

- Corning Glass Works (Corning, NY) and Ciba-Geigy (Ardsley, NY) have formed Ciba Corning Diagnostics Corp. to develop diagnostics.

- Eastman Kodak (Rochester, NY) and ICN Pharmaceuticals (Covina, CA) will invest \$45 million over six years in a joint research venture called Nucleic Acid Research Institute. It will focus on combatting viral infections and slowing the aging process.

- Hygeia Sciences (Cambridge, MA) said that Tambrands Inc. will distribute its pregnancy and ovulation tests for over-the-counter markets.

- Cambridge BioScience (Hopkinton, MA), has assigned world-wide exclusive rights to its HTLV-III second generation diagnostic test for AIDS to Ortho Diagnostic Systems (Raritan, NJ). Ortho's parent firm, Johnson and Johnson, is providing funds for development of the test, and has also made an initial equity investment in Cambridge Biosciences.

- Nova Pharmaceutical Corp. (Baltimore, MD) has acquired exclusive rights to a series of compounds which will relieve pain and inflammation. Several of these compounds block the activity of bradykinin, a peptide which acts directly on specific pain receptors in sensory nerves. The bradykinin antagonists were developed by John Stewart and Raymond Vavrek of the University Colorado School of Medicine. Nova also has a license from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center to develop and market a new opiate compound. The drug, oxymorphanazine (OMZ), controls pain longer than morphine, and is non-addictive.

A new test for diagnosing seropositive rheumatoid arthritis has been developed by researchers at Stanford University. The test, which identifies marker genes located in the major histocompatibility complex, has proven 100 percent accurate in preliminary clinical studies.