

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

Maybe the prospect of a big meal and a few days off breached my professional cynicism, but last week's US Thanksgiving holiday gave me pause to reflect that, in the six or so years that I've been writing this column, scientists have accrued a number of reasons to be thankful. I'll start in the United States. Although the budget for the National Institutes of Health has been somewhat flat in recent years, it is still much larger than it was six years ago. And more money is being spent on training schemes, such as the \$75 million recently announced for training in bioinformatics research. I must admit, however, that many scientists might also view politics as obstructive to some research areas. That would probably be the general feeling about the US policy that restricts funding for research on human embryonic stem cells. But even on this contentious issue, individual states and foundations have taken the initiative — take the recent referendum in Missouri, which provided a narrow victory in favour of state funding for stem-cell research.

Much of the world might not celebrate Thanksgiving, but scientists outside the United States have some things to be grateful for, too. The growth of major biomedical research foundations, such as the Wellcome Trust, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, means that billions of dollars are being funnelled into unique approaches for doing research globally. Students and postdocs, meanwhile, are forming more organizations and associations to help young scientists explore their career options. And many European countries have agreed to increase their financial commitment to research and development, and are working to build bridges between academia and industry.

As for me, on my travels throughout North America, Europe and Asia, I'm grateful for numerous acts of kindness — from countless cups of coffee and tea, to a recent ride on the back of a bicycle that helped me get to a key interview. But the biggest debt of thanks I owe is to the hundreds of scientists who have agreed to speak to me about their career issues and aspirations in order to help their colleagues. Thanks, everybody.

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