

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
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The financial crisis that continues to reverberate worldwide promises to affect plenty of scientists. Boston University in Massachusetts is one of the first to freeze hiring and halt new building projects. And according to a 1 October article in the *Boston Globe*, the American Council on Education says that many more institutions are likely to follow suit.

A prolonged downturn might mean that the hiring of adjunct staff in place of tenure-track faculty members, a practice that is gaining popularity because it saves money, could become even more commonplace. Tuition fees are likely to rise, and as student loans get harder to secure, private colleges might be forced to chip away bigger chunks of their endowments to support students.

Some endowments have taken a sizeable hit. London's Wellcome Trust, the world's largest medical charity, has had its endowment drop by up to 10% to roughly £13 billion (US\$23 billion), mostly because of stock-market gyrations. New York's Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory has seen its \$300 million endowment drop by around 5% (see *Nature* **455**, 712-713; 2008). And the charitable giving that is the lifeblood of many science institutions could well drop off in the coming months.

Other organizations are likely to fare better, however. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase, Maryland, for example, whose endowment has seen minimal damage, has no current plans to cut back on projects. And many universities may see a rise in enrolment if the downturn continues for an extended period of time — dwindling job prospects often spur an exodus back to school.

Energy and environment research may still see long-term growth. In the United States, the presidential candidates routinely pledge significant investments in alternative energies and climate-change programmes, saying that these expenditures will help create millions of 'green jobs' (see *Nature* **455**, 565; 2008). Of course, many campaign promises are not realized, and the crisis is still in its early stages. Already dealing with slimmed-down budgets, researchers would do well to monitor the economic health of their institution and the field of their choice.

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