

**PUBLISHER AND
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Kristine Chin
(212) 591-7662
krisc@aiche.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Cynthia F. Mascone
(212) 591-7343
cynfm@aiche.org

SENIOR EDITOR

Rita L. D'Aquino
(212) 591-7317
ritad@aiche.org

ART DIRECTOR

Jose Andrade
(212) 591-8678
josea@aiche.org

**PRODUCTION
COORDINATOR**

Karen Simpson
(212) 591-7337
kares@aiche.org

ILLUSTRATORS

Jesse Gunzel
Sean Dagony-Clark
Alice Schwade

**REGULATORY
EDITOR**

William A. Shirley
(888) 674-2529
envtllaw@earthlink.net

**PATENT LAW
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M. Henry Heines
(415) 576-0200
mhh@townsend.com

Frank C. Eymard
(504) 585-0449
eymardfc@arlaw.com

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Denise Deluca-Mallon
(212) 591-7170
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AIChE

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF
CHEMICAL ENGINEERS

THREE PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY
10016-5991
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sara1@aiche.org

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**Editorial****Academic and
Industrial Collaboration**

According to statistics released by the National Science Foundation, U.S. R&D is projected to have increased from \$276.4 billion in 2002 to \$283.8 billion in 2003 — a mere 1% after accounting for inflation. A majority of the expenditures, \$179.6 billion, came from industry, while the federal government spent \$85.3 billion. Interestingly, industry parceled out \$2.12 billion for research performed by universities and colleges, which is quite a dramatic change from a couple of decades ago. This is in large part thanks to the 1980 Bayh-Dole Act, which motivated universities and colleges to partner with industry to commercialize promising research that is federally funded.

Although academia and industry collaboration isn't a new subject, it is still one that is passionately debated. In the April 12, 2004 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, the article "Who Foots Those Bills?" (pp. 50–51) briefly explores the controversial topic of corporate funding of research. It speaks of one researcher whose findings were allegedly suppressed by the company that funded the research, and of another who benefited immensely from an alliance with industry. The article raises the key question, "Are scientists and engineers entering into agreements that 'foster conflicts of interest and secrecy?'" Generally speaking, there is a large cultural gap between the two groups — academia focuses on conducting research for the sake of knowledge, while industry often conducts research to gain a competitive edge. And although this is a gap that may never be bridged completely, it does not necessarily mean that industry and academia should not work together.

The *U.S. World News Report* article mentioned that "many academics believe that they can maintain their independence through carefully written contracts and oversight teams." Such is the case at Stanford University, which, in November of 2002, launched the Global Climate and Energy Project (GCEP) — a 10-yr, \$225 million project sponsored by ExxonMobil, General Electric, Schlumberger and Toyota. The overall goal of GCEP is to develop new, environmentally friendly technologies that will meet the world's growing energy needs.

"An important part of this effort will be the dissemination of the research results," said John Hennessy, president of Stanford, at the launch of GCEP. "Research conducted at Stanford University must be openly available, and everything we do will be communicated to the public and the science and engineering community..." To ensure that this promise is kept, the university has established "two internal committees and another outside board to watch for potential conflicts of interest." Over the next eight years, when the project reaches completion, we will see whether or not such measures meet their objective.

Kristine Chin
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief
krisc@aiche.org