Bassler and Dikic win Vallee Foundation visiting professorships

Bonnie Bassler of Princeton University and Ivan Dikic of Goethe University have won Vallee Foundation visiting professorships, which allow senior scientists to spend four weeks in other labs around the world.

Bassler is the chair of Princeton’s molecular biology department and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator. Dikic is the director of the Institute for Biochemistry and scientific director of the Buchman Institute at Goethe. They were among six honorees chosen this year for the program.

All of the winners will be supported by the foundation as they embark upon various pursuits of intellectual exchange at institutes worldwide. Dozens of researchers, about a third of them ASBMB members, have won Vallee professorships over the years. The program will begin accepting nominations again in October. Recipients are allowed up to two years to take advantage of the visiting professorship.

Ortiz named editor-in-chief of BAMBEd

Phillip Ortiz, the assistant provost for undergraduate education at the State University of New York, has been named editor-in-chief of the journal Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education, commonly known as BAMBEd.

In a letter to readers, Ortiz said he, along with the editorial board, will “determine areas that the journal might explore so that it can continue to meet the needs of educators throughout the world.”

Crane, Jez and Johnson named HHMI professors

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute has awarded $1 million each to three members of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

Brian Crane of Cornell University, Joseph Jez of Washington University and Tracy Johnson of the University of California, Los Angeles, were among the 15 people named as the 2014 HHMI professors. The awards, which will be dispersed over five years, are intended to support the integration of research with undergraduate teaching.

In a statement, HHMI said: “HHMI professors are accomplished research scientists who are making science more engaging for undergraduates. By providing HHMI professors with the funds and support to implement their ideas, HHMI hopes to empower these individuals to create new models for teaching science at research universities.”

The honors resulted from a competition for professors at the 106 research universities deemed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as having “very high research activity.” In the end, there were 173 proposals judged by a panel of scientists and educators. Finalists were called to make presentations at HHMI in May. Images courtesy of Paul Morigi of HHMI.
Damn the fool who does not attend these meetings: The consequence is failure to maintain club membership. And why is club membership of such vital importance? Yes, precisely, there is nearly a one-to-one correspondence between these clubs and CSR study sections. To think that a grant applicant would have even a prayer of winning a fundable score from a study section wherein the applicant is not a club member is to be equated with idiocy.

Whether clubs came from committees or vice versa matters not – that is where evolution of our biomedical enterprise has taken us. Upon closing out his presidency in 1960, Dwight Eisenhower offered the cautionary statement, “beware of the military industrial complex.” I close with a similar warning: Beware of the biomedical industrial complex. In subsequent essays, I will offer ideas on how we might reverse untoward trends.