

Washington Monitor

Obama: Science & Technology "Critical to Meeting 21st Century Challenges"

President-elect Barack Obama used his December 20 national radio address to announce the leaders of his Administration's science and technology team. As part of the announcement, Obama cited the criticality of science and tech and stated, "It's time we once again put science at the top our agenda and work to restore America's place as the world leader in science and technology."

From looking at the list of the new president's priorities, it is clear that geography will have a seat at the table. He specifically noted that his goals include promoting science to slow global warming and "the innovations to remake our industries and create twenty-first century jobs." As readers of this column are well aware, the U.S. Department of Labor has designated geospatial technologies as one of three most important emerging and evolving technology fields (along with nanotech and biotech).

Members of Obama's leadership team will include:

- **John Holdren** as Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP); he will concurrently serve as Co-Chair of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). Holdren is the Teresa and John Heinz Professor of Environmental Policy and Director of the Program on Science, Technology, and Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, as well as President and Director of the Woods Hole Research Center. He is also Professor of Environmental Science and Policy in Harvard's Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences. From 2005–2008, Holdren served as President-Elect, President, and Chair of the Board of American Association for the Advancement of Science. Holdren has worked closely with many geographers on sustainability science and policy.
- **Eric Lander** and **Harold Varmus** will serve as the other co-chairs of PCAST. Lander is the founding director of the Broad Institute and one of the principal leaders of the Human Genome Project. He is also professor of biology at MIT and professor of systems biology at Harvard Medical School. Varmus is a former Director of the National Institutes of Health and co-recipient of a Nobel Prize for studies of the genetic basis of cancer. He has served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center since January 2000.
- **Jane Lubchenco** is Obama's nominee for Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Lubchenco is an environmental scientist and marine ecologist. She has been on the faculty at Oregon State University since 1978. She is Past-President of the International Council for Science and a former President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Ecological Society of America. She received her Ph.D. from Harvard University in marine ecology.
- **Steven Chu** has been nominated for U.S. Secretary of Energy. Chu served most recently as director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab and as professor of physics and molecular and cellular biology at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the 1997 winner of the Nobel Prize for physics and previously had an academic appointment at Stanford University. Motivated by a deep interest in climate change, he transformed Lawrence Berkeley into a broad and innovative research program on energy technologies. He has a BS in physics from the University of Rochester and a Ph.D. from UC-Berkeley.
- **Carol Browner** will serve as Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change on the White House staff. Browner has been a Principal of The Albright Group LLC, where worked on environmental protection, climate change, and energy conservation and security issues. She previously served as President Clinton's Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a Cabinet-level position she held for eight years. Prior to her EPA service, Browner was Secretary of the State of Florida's Department of Environmental Regulation and also served as Legislative Director for U.S. Senator Al Gore.
- **Lisa Jackson** is Mr. Obama's nominee for Administrator of the EPA. Jackson became the head of New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in 2006 and also served as chief of staff to Governor Jon Corzine. Her past experience includes management responsibilities at the EPA's regional office in New York for the Superfund program, the federal program regulating hazardous waste cleanup projects; for enforcement programs at both EPA and DEP; and for New Jersey's Land Use Management Program. She has also focused on water issues, including expanding protections for surface waters that serve as sources of drinking water and habitat for endangered species. Jackson received her Master's in chemical engineering from Princeton University and did her undergraduate work at Tulane.



Holdren

Federal Stimulus Beneficiaries Could Include University Infrastructure Projects

In late December, the leaders of 40 top American universities signed onto

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an open letter to President-elect Obama urging the inclusion of \$40-45 billion in the planned federal stimulus legislation for "shovel-ready" facilities projects at higher education institutions around the country. The letter recommends that the funds be allocated to the states on the basis of population and that Governors be tasked with direct distribution of the money. The signatories also urged that "federal funds should be conditional on states' agreement not to use these federal funds as an excuse to reduce budgetary commitments to universities." The entire letter is available on the web at www.carnegie.org/

[pdf/CCNY-HigherEducationAd-NYT.pdf](#) In order to ensure timely delivery of the dollars, the leaders assert that "only projects on which construction can begin within 120-180 days should be funded. No project-by-project approval in Washington, D.C. would be necessary; no new federal bureaucracy need be created. Federal funding should be approved only in cases where states or institutions match the federal grants, contributing 20 percent of the total project cost. This will ensure that only the highest-priority projects are funded." The letter goes on to note that Governors should be allowed to allocate

some of these funds to private universities, provided the federal dollars are matched.

While a draft of the Obama stimulus proposal has yet to be released, it appears that there is significant momentum towards including some funds for higher-ed infrastructure purposes. This would be well received by university leaders across the country – especially since it is unlikely that any significant influx of research dollars will be included in the stimulus package.

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