

FUNDING

NAVIGRANT HELPS SIFT GRANT MONEY, POACH RECRUITS

It's a difficult task to figure out who actually winds up with all the grant money from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, or other sources, such as foundations and philanthropies. The information is out there, to be sure — spread among various databases and piles of governmental data. But anyone who wants to know who got what grant and for how much has to invest some serious time in tracking down that data.

A new Web-based tool called NaviGrant, developed by G&S Discovery, aims to ease the pain. The subscription-based service also provides information about research trends — which fields are getting the most grants — in the life sciences. Not only are marketing and product development people using this service, says Vice President **Mark Walker**, but so are researchers and research departments.

“Our goal was to really understand the research trends and to spend some time and help our clients understand the researchers’ needs,” Walker says. “We’ve had a lot of interest from the research community, individual researchers, and research departments because there is a lot of value ... to sharing this information,” he adds.

Coming online earlier this year, NaviGrant is now used by more than 100 com-

panies. Customers can search the grants database by principal investigator name, institution, or other keyword. The database compiles publicly available data from government and foundation sources. A typical search results page includes the PI's name, the grant title with an abstract, award and project dates, and funding information (Walker notes, though, that not every source always provides all of that information). NaviGrant also offers analysis of grant information by institution, sector, and time frame.

“We’re trying to add a level to actually help people see the insights pretty quickly,” Walker says.

Some research departments, he says, are using the tool as an aid in their recruiting efforts for new faculty. They use the database to identify people who have generated a lot of grants or whose work would supplement or complement existing programs in their own department. “It’s one way to identify those people that are leaders in their field,” Walker says.

Currently, the NaviGrant tool only catalogs US grant funding sources, but Walker says the company plans to add more sources, from both the United States and internationally.

— *Ciara Curtin*

SCREENING

AT MIT, YANIK'S MICROCHIP TAKES WORM ASSAYS HIGH-THROUGHPUT

MIT researchers have created a lab-on-a-chip device that can be used to run high-throughput assays on the model lab worm, *C. elegans*. **Mehmet Yanik**, an assistant professor of electrical engineering and computer science at MIT, is counting on his invention to change the face of high-throughput, live animal screening.

“We developed the technology that basically allows you to completely computerize

these screens,” Yanik says. Prior to this, large-scale screens were run on individual worms, and they had to be assayed one at a time, a process that is both time-consuming and labor-intensive. This chip is the first of its kind, and a variety of assays can be run more efficiently — on a genome-wide, high-throughput scale — that couldn't be done before. The chip works by flowing the worms inside, immobilizing them by suction, and

Entelos acquired toxigenomics firm **Iconix Biosciences** in an all-share transaction initially valued at \$14.1 million but with the potential of rising to \$39 million if certain milestones are achieved within one year following the close of the deal. **Jim Neal**, CEO of Iconix, will join Entelos as chief business officer.

Agendia said it raised €25 million in a fourth financing round. Bank-insurer **ING** becomes a shareholder, though Agendia did not disclose the amount it invested. Also participating in the round were current investors **Van Herk Biotech**, **Gilde Healthcare Partners**, and **Gobal Life Science Ventures**.

Bar Harbor BioTechnology won a development award of \$334,632 from the **Maine Technology Institute** to help the company develop human genetic profiling products. Bar Harbor BioTechnology was founded in September 2006 by scientists from **Jackson Laboratories** in Maine with the goal of building gene detection arrays as well as bioinformatics resources and tools for molecular profiling.

The **National Library of Medicine** awarded a \$5.2 million grant to the **University of Wisconsin, Madison**, to extend its Computation and Informatics in Biology and Medicine Training Program for five years.

Optical mapping firm **OpGen** closed a funding round worth \$23.6 million. Investors included **CHL Medical Partners**, **Highland Capital Partners**, **Versant Ventures**, and **Mason Wells**.