

lead to declining standards. He also cautions that peer review, which began as a measure to shield the autonomy of science from administrators and politicians, is threatened by internal politics such as rivalries between scientists and the likelihood of theft of ideas and insights by peer reviewers, who are often competitors of the authors of articles. Judson predicts that structural transformation in sciences would have its impact on peer review processes. Shortage of funds for research, intensification of competition, increasing pressure from funding agencies for research targeted at national needs, with emphasis on industrial and technological exploitation of research, are characteristics of the current transition. Profit motives determine the direction of research. Criteria for the evaluation of a research work are determined by non-scientists and the emphasis is on outcome

and endpoints than on inputs. Yet another transformation is the development of electronic collaboration, which offers considerable options for interaction between editors, authors and readers. New procedures for manuscript assessment are expected to replace the current practices.

What did the participants feel after the congress? Attitude survey conducted after the conference revealed that a vast majority of respondents thought that peer review improves the quality of publication, that the journals should adopt uniform standards for peer review and that the editors should encourage research to establish baseline data on the prevalence of scientific fraud. Among the respondents, 95% said that conferences on editorial peer review should be held regularly in the future.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

### What NSU report leaves unanswered!

This refers to the Special Section of *Current Science* (25 June) in which you have closed the debate on NSU. To me it appears that the debate has been ineffective and inconclusive. I was surprised and somewhat disappointed to note that you have not summarized in clear terms, with reasonable details, what your authors and readers have generally opined about the new university. In your 'In this issue' column, there appears a remark 'there were few supporters of the NSU concept'. I just wonder if the term *few* is actually intended to mean *some* (equivalent to *a few*) or to imply *hardly any* (which it really does)! In the latter case, your authors' and readers' message is rather clear.

There are a few important questions that have been left unaddressed in the final report. Supporters of NSU and those actively engaged in its establishment should feel obliged to give serious thought to these. Some of them are:

1. NSU will be producing some 200 Ph D's every year. Where would they be

expected to go? Would they accept to work in other Indian universities/colleges whose academic environment would hardly match that of the said university?

2. Will the phenomenon of brain-drain not apply to the trained scientists coming out of NSU? Will they be allowed to go abroad, since in a free and democratic country nobody can be stopped from searching for a better working place? Will we allow brain-drain, giving the argument that science is universal and that complete mobility must be granted to scientists so that they could work in a place of their liking? But then we have to remember that there are moments when we become specially conscious of our nationalism and start talking of things like Indian science.

3. The report states that NSU would also train foreign students. Why spend the available resources on foreign students? Why not train more and more Indian students? After all, the university would hardly be able to cater to the academic needs of our vast population. That means we would be obliged to

concentrate our efforts fully on training as many Indians as possible.

I have a suggestion to make. All those who are involved in erecting NSU - a temple of academic excellence - should avoid accepting a faculty chair or any other position of importance on the completion of the task. In the end, they should hand over the institution to deserving people from within the country and from outside. This will reinforce the faith reposed on them by the general public and will also succeed in impressing upon the skeptics that NSU was not being created in their own interests but in the interest of the nation. Let us remember that great men, whose actions are motivated by a deep-rooted concern about the welfare of the society, gracefully leave a completed project to others to look after and move on to a newer venture.

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