THE WORKFORCE
LIKABLE STRANGER. To not know the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) is to love it. That’s the curious message from a new Gallup poll of 2600 U.S. adults asked about working for the federal government. The Council for Excellence in Government (celegov.org) is worried about what will happen when millions of baby boomers retire. So it asked Gallup to survey Generation Y (aged 18 to 29), older workers, and various white-collar professionals about the missions and attractiveness of 25 departments and agencies. Overall, a bare 37% knew what NSF does, placing it ahead of only the near-invisible Office of Personnel Management. But the agency ranked fifth highest as a potentially interesting place to work. NASA scored near the top in both categories, second in interest and a lofty 86% in awareness. “That’s a good place to start,” says Gallup’s Darby Miller Steiger. “But it means NSF needs to work harder on getting the word out.”

PIONEERS
A LASTING GIFT. During the final weeks of their 9-year-old daughter’s life, Shayne and Angela Thomas asked Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia to develop a cell line from her drug-resistant neuroblastoma. Now, barely 3 months after Christi’s death, scientists are gearing up for studies with the cell line, which could one day help others battle this childhood cancer.

Three Q’s >>

In April, physicist Fred Dylla, 57, becomes executive director and CEO of the American Institute of Physics (AIP), which represents 10 professional societies and publishes a variety of journals. An administrator at the Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility in Newport News, Virginia, Dylla will succeed the retiring Marc Brodsky.

Q: What is the biggest challenge facing AIP?
Our primary challenge is to fully embrace and push for the recommendations in Rising Above the Gathering Storm, the [National Academies] report that calls for increased funding for the sciences and science education.

Q: Will the AIP journals move toward open access?
Of course, we want the journals to be widely accessible. But the community also wants any publication to be high-quality, peer-reviewed, and archival, and those things have to be paid for. I think there is a business model emerging in which publication fees from the author and subscription fees from large institutions will pay for the value added.

Q: What can AIP do to increase diversity in physics?
There’s no silver bullet. You have to address the entire pipeline from grade school to mentoring professionals.