

Transitions

San Diego-based structural proteomics company Syrrx last month announced the appointment of **Keith Wilson** as vice-president of technology. Wilson was previously a project leader with Vertex Pharmaceuticals of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Former NASA astronaut and assistant deputy administrator **Charles Bolden** has been nominated to become the next deputy administrator for the space agency. Major General Bolden currently serves as the commanding general for the Third Marine Aircraft Wing.

Exelixis this month appointed **Robert Myers** as executive vice-president, pharmaceuticals. Myers comes to the South San Francisco-based biotech firm from ALZA, a drug-discovery company based in Mountain View, California. ALZA recently merged with Johnson & Johnson.

Peter Freeman, dean of computing at Georgia Institute of Technology, will join the US National Science Foundation in May as assistant director for computer and information science and engineering.

Philip Davies, professor of American studies at De Montfort University and chair of the British Association for American Studies, has been appointed the next director of the David and Mary Eccles Centre for American Studies at the British Library.

Frank Bash, director of the McDonald Observatory at the University of Texas at Austin, has announced that he will leave his post on 31 August 2003. The search for his replacement will begin immediately.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

After almost 27 years with the US National Institute of General Medical Sciences, director **Marvin Cassman** is leaving. In May, he will become head of the Institute for Bioengineering, Biotechnology and Quantitative Biomedical Research (QB3). Currently under construction, QB3 will be based at the University of California, San Francisco, and will be shared with the university's Berkeley and Santa Cruz campuses.

Cassman is leaving the US National Institutes of Health in the wake of several other high-level departures, but says that the timing is coincidental. "I'm not going because I'm tired or unhappy here," he says. Instead, Cassman says the move will allow him to focus more strongly on one of his major interests: integrating physics, mathematics and biology into a systems approach to biology.

He anticipates that the "key problem" in building the new institute will be coordinating research activities across the three separate campuses. He notes that arranging communication between the three, which are spread throughout the Bay Area, is just as problematic as coordinating sites dispersed around the country, as commuting from campus to campus can take hours because of the area's notorious traffic problems.

CHEMISTRY

Last month, **Jacques Livage** delivered his first lecture for his chair in condensed matter chemistry at the Collège de France. It marked the first time since 1930 that two chemists have held such positions at the Collège de France. The other chemistry chair is held by **Jean-Marie Lehn**, who shared the chemistry Nobel prize in 1987.

Livage has been a professor of chemistry at the Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris since 1973, but his new position means that he will no longer handle administrative duties there. Instead, he will continue with his lab research, and will prepare and deliver 18 lectures a year around the country. "We're not allowed to give the same lecture twice," Livage says. That challenge will allow him to present up-to-date scientific material to his audiences. "It's a very pleasant thing to give lectures on an interesting topic," he says, "and you have no exams."

The timeliness of his lecture subjects will help them to meld with his research interests in solid-state chemistry — especially *chimie douce* ('soft chemistry'), which he helped to pioneer with **Jean Rouxel** in the 1970s. Livage is keen on



Marvin Cassman



Jeffrey Nye



Jacques Livage

making hybrid materials by using soft-solution processing approaches to mix organic and inorganic starting materials. His lab is also working on trapping bacteria inside silica gels — an approach that he hopes will result in new types of biosensor and drug-delivery systems.

PHARMACEUTICALS

Jeffrey Nye paved the way for his transition from academia to industry through a steady stream of consulting work. Nye left the Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago late last year to take up a post with drug company Pharmacia in Kalamazoo, Michigan. But he has been advising drug-development companies and venture capitalists since he was a graduate student. While at Northwestern, Nye's work focused on the genetics of spina bifida.

As director of central nervous system-related genomics discovery for Pharmacia, Nye is enthusiastic about the potential of therapeutics for Alzheimer's disease. The chance to translate basic research on that disease into potential treatment was one attraction that lured him to the job. He also enjoys being involved in business, medicine, science and law. "Here I get to merge all my interests," he says of his new post.

GENOMICS

Life-sciences company Amersham Biosciences this month announced the appointment of **Trevor Hawkins** as senior vice-president of genomics. Hawkins joins Amersham from his position as director of the US Department of Energy's Joint Genome Institute (JGI).

When he joined the JGI as deputy director in 1999, its funding and mission were unclear. But that all changed when the JGI played an important role in sequencing the human genome — an accomplishment that Hawkins found gratifying. "It's always nice to leave on a high," he says.

In some respects, his departure from the institute is a return to his commercial roots. Before joining the JGI, Hawkins was vice-president of genomics for CuraGen, a biotech company in New Haven, Connecticut. There he had an almost entirely scientific role. At Amersham, he is looking to branch out, taking on business development and marketing responsibilities. "I had always seen my future as running a commercial enterprise," he says. "This is a good step forward for my own career goals."

CONTACTING US AT MOVERS

Please send any information on appointments or job moves to: naturejobseditor@naturedc.com.