

Transitions

✕ **Peter Lee** was this month appointed chief executive of AgriGenesis, a plant-science firm based in Auckland, New Zealand.

✕ **Richard Gibbs**, director of the Human Genome Sequencing Center at Baylor College of Medicine, **Jorge Galán**, professor and chairman of microbial pathogenesis at the Yale University School of Medicine, and **Ian Lipkin**, epidemiology professor at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, were this month appointed to the scientific advisory board of 454 Life Sciences, a genomic-sequencing-technology company in Branford, Connecticut.

✕ **Michael Valentino** was this month appointed president and chief executive of Adams Laboratories, a pharmaceutical company based in Fort Worth, Texas, that specializes in drugs for respiratory care. Valentino, who takes over the reins from **Mark Gainor**, was president and chief operating officer, global pharmaceuticals, of Alpha, a generic-drug company based in New Jersey.

✕ **James Rothman** was last month appointed chief scientific adviser for Amersham. Rothman, currently chairman of the Cellular Biochemistry and Biophysics Program at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, was recently recruited to Columbia University to found the Center for Chemical Biology.

✕ **Zahed Subhan** has joined Copenhagen-based biotech company Nuevolution as chief executive. Subhan was previously vice-president of business development at Locus Pharmaceuticals, a drug-development company that is based in Pennsylvania.

LIFE SCIENCES

Last month, **Sheldon Schuster** became the new president of the Keck Graduate Institute (KGI) in Claremont, California, close to Los Angeles. He succeeds the KGI's founding president, **Henry Riggs**. Riggs set up the graduate educational and research institution, which is focused on applied life sciences, in 1997 to break down barriers between academia and industry. There are 17 faculty members.

Schuster brings considerable experience in higher education and research to the job. Before joining the KGI, he was assistant vice-president for research and graduate education, and director of the biotechnology programme, at the University of Florida in Gainesville. He was also a professor of biochemistry and molecular biology with an interest in studying enzyme targets for developing anti-cancer drugs. "I have had experience in all of the pieces of this and was just excited about the opportunity to see it brought together," Schuster says.

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

Astrophysicist **Michael Turner** of the University of Chicago is to head the mathematical and physical sciences directorate at the US National Science Foundation (NSF). The directorate, which commands 20% (or US\$1 billion for the current fiscal year) of the NSF's total budget, supports research in mathematics, physics, chemistry, materials and astronomy, as well as multidisciplinary and educational programmes.

Turner takes up the post on 1 October, initially serving for a two-year term. But he also intends to continue with his research, dividing his time between the NSF and the University of Chicago, where he is chair of the department of astronomy and astrophysics. Turner's research career spans three decades. He is a member of the US National Academy of Sciences and is also a senior scientist at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Illinois.

"I think the strongest credential that I bring to this job is my close connection with the scientific community," he says. Great attention has been paid to the biological sciences over the past decade, he adds; this is an opportunity to redress the balance and "really move the physical sciences forward".

As assistant director, Turner will set the vision for the directorate — one of seven at the NSF — and must make the case before Congress. He would, for instance, like to see greater support for research probing the origin and evolution of the Universe.

Another area would be high-energy



Sheldon Schuster



Michael Turner



Michael Dexter



Bernice Welles

physics, which, in the United States, "is not healthy right now", says Turner.

GENETICS

Michael Dexter, former director of the Wellcome Trust, will head the International Centre for Life in Newcastle, UK, starting in November. Dexter headed the Wellcome Trust during the international Human Genome Project, which culminated in a freely available draft sequence in February 2001. At the Centre for Life he will help steer the Wellcome-supported institution on its mission to engage the public in science — especially in the areas of genetics and genomics. Dexter will succeed outgoing chairman **Matt Ridley**.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Bernice Welles, who has a degree in music, a graduate degree in urban and environmental policy, and a medical degree, has followed a similarly varied professional track. This month she joined the MPM BioVentures group as a venture partner in its San Francisco office. Previously Welles worked as an independent biotech consultant, spent almost eight years at biotech company Genentech, most recently as vice-president of product development, and started out on her postgraduate career as an assistant professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.

Welles says that her diverse educational and professional paths are signs of the times, with people making more changes in their career and making education a perpetual goal, rather than a finite destination. For Welles, that flexibility meant following seemingly unrelated interests that eventually complemented one another.

As well as following her loves, she also used some pragmatism. She liked her music-theory classes so much that she considered doing a PhD in the subject, but graduate students in it convinced her otherwise. "Most of them were unemployed," Welles says. "The lucky ones were writing jingles."

So she hedged her bets by also pursuing pre-med coursework. That turned out to be a prudent decision, but the mathematical aspects of music theory helped her, both in her pursuit of her public-health-related master's and now in her analysis of investment portfolios. Her permanent education continues, with coursework towards an executive MBA under way. "I am kind of an education junkie," Welles says. "But I think this will be my last degree."

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