

# MOVERS

**Michael Morgan, chief scientific officer, Genome Canada, Ottawa, Canada**



**2002-06:** Consultant for special projects, Wellcome Trust, London, UK

**1998-2002:** Director, research partnerships and ventures, and chief executive of the Wellcome Trust Genome Campus, Cambridge, UK

**1994-98:** Chairman of science funding, Wellcome Trust, London, UK

Michael Morgan, the orchestrator of the Wellcome Trust's genomics initiatives and the new chief scientific officer of Genome Canada, is certain that his far-reaching influence wouldn't have been possible had he followed the typical path of a bench scientist.

While studying microbiology at Trinity College, Dublin, Morgan was seduced by biochemistry as a way to study the chemical processes that unite life. After his PhD at the University of Leicester, UK, during which he probed the regulation of carbohydrate metabolism in *Escherichia coli*, Morgan received a Commonwealth Fund scholarship to do a postdoc wherever he liked in the United States. Studying somatic cell genetics and virology there was refreshing, he says, because high-risk, cutting-edge scientific experiments were encouraged.

Back in Britain, Morgan spent several years lecturing at Leicester. But academia had little support from the UK government during the 1980s and he jumped at the chance of involvement with the Wellcome Trust's new cell- and molecular-biology grants programme. Although its initial budget was a fraction of today's, Morgan enjoyed his newfound access to people and money. "I was able to engage across a broader spectrum of science," he says.

As the Wellcome Trust grew, so did his responsibilities. Morgan's most profound career decision was to facilitate Wellcome's involvement with human genome sequencing efforts. In addition to arguing that data from the human genome sequence should be released quickly into the public domain to encourage international cooperation, Morgan helped form the Sanger and Wellcome Trust policies, says Martin Bobrow, the trust's deputy chairman. Those policies became the foundation for the international data-sharing principles. The Wellcome Trust Genome Campus, Sanger Institute and European Bioinformatics Institute followed, as Morgan helped put in place Britain's much-needed genomics infrastructure.

A reorganization of the trust led to his appointment as director of research partnerships and ventures, where he began managing high-profile projects such as the SNPs Consortium and the Structural Genomics Consortium.

Now Morgan is heading for Genome Canada, a non-profit genomic and proteomic research foundation set up in 2000 and running five new research centres. His mission, he says, is to amass the scientific rigour and expertise necessary to carry out an ambitious scientific agenda. ■

Virginia Gewin

## SCIENTISTS & SOCIETIES

### A bridge from Portugal to the States

For years, Portugal's low number of PhDs and inefficient academic system have inhibited the generation of knowledge, technological development and modernization. In response, Portuguese governments have invested significantly in higher education at the PhD level. They have awarded thousands of fellowships to encourage students to go abroad as part of their postgraduate work. A new generation of students with a more informed vision of economics, politics and science has emerged.

Set up in 1998, the Portuguese American Postgraduate Society (PAPS) now has about 800 members all over the United States, hailing from fields such as biology, economics and the social sciences. Many are now professors and business managers in the United States, Portugal and other countries. PAPS aims to foster connections between Portuguese postgraduates in the United States and their peers in Portuguese academia and industry.

The latest of PAPS' seven annual forums — Fruitful Connections across the Atlantic: Science and Technology Networks — took place at the University of California, Berkeley, in March. Portugal's minister for the environment and secretary of state for science and technology were

there, along with managers from US companies such as Microsoft, Cisco and Genentech.

Researchers such as Alcino Silva, a neuroscientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, advocated strong networking to bring students and postdocs to the best US laboratories. In one collaboration, academics at the University of California, San Francisco, are working with Portuguese biotech entrepreneurs. In another, managers at Cisco are helping find work for Portuguese students. We also expect networks to be formed in other fields.

PAPS promotes 'learning tours' for Portuguese academics and politicians to visit US entrepreneurs. It also urges a change of attitude, for scientific merit and teaching capabilities to be valued above the amount of time spent in the academic system. PAPS has promoted discussions on this topic through a blog and submitted recommendations to the government.

PAPS helps postgraduates act as a bridge between Portugal and the United States. In the process, we hope to help Portugal improve its performance in science and technology for years to come. ■

**Tiago Fleming Outeiro is chairman of PAPS and a research fellow at Harvard Medical School.**

#### GRADUATE JOURNAL

### Scheduling my defence

As I get closer to defending my thesis research, the greatest challenge, aside from the thesis itself, has yet to be conquered: finding a date and time at which all my committee members can be present. After several years in graduate school scheduling advisory meetings, then committee meetings, and finally my PhD qualifying and comprehensive exams, I have gained valuable experience in how to get five professors to meet at the same time. But it still hasn't been easy.

At my first advisory meetings, no one except for my main adviser used to show up. On his recommendation, I replaced the members who never attended with professors who took their advising duties more seriously. The problem was solved. With this in mind, I carefully selected my thesis committee on the basis not only of their reputations as scientists, but of their purported social skills and ability to handle students. It has made a big difference.

But despite a great and supportive committee, a defence date has still not been set. This time I must coordinate the schedules of a professor in Bermuda, one on safari in Africa, one travelling the silk road in China, one who remains to be located, and luckily for me, one whose office is next to mine. He was there last time I checked five minutes ago! Wish me luck — and thank you whoever invented e-mail. ■

**Andreas Andersson is a final-year PhD student in oceanography at the University of Hawaii.**