

MOVERS

Daniel Kelly, scientific director, Burnham Institute for Medical Research, Orlando, Florida



2006–present: Chief, Cardiovascular Division, Department of Medicine, Washington University School of Medicine, St Louis, Missouri

1999–present: Professor of medicine, molecular biology and pharmacology, Washington University School of Medicine, St Louis, Missouri

Daniel Kelly is a self-described late bloomer. Trained as a clinical physician, he realized several years into his schooling that he was most interested in the fundamental basis of disease. But he felt he was too far along to pursue the now common MD/PhD. So Kelly immersed himself in a research postdoctoral fellowship at Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis, Missouri, to learn the molecular biology of mitochondrial enzyme pathways and the genetic basis of diseases that cause heart failure and metabolic disorders in children.

"It was an exhilarating but disorienting time," he says, lamenting that the intensity and costs of training made it hard to deviate from a career path late in the game.

Following his fellowship, Kelly slowly began doing more basic science and less clinical medicine after setting up a lab at Washington University. In the mid-1990s, he founded the Center for Cardiovascular Research and established a cross-department network of scientists interested in various aspects of cardiovascular disease and metabolism, a rarity at the time. The centre has made great strides in linking cell metabolic disorders to disease, in part thanks to Kelly's pioneering work in mice.

In 2006, Kelly became chief of the cardiovascular division at Washington University's School of Medicine. He enjoyed the challenge, but found that his true passion lay in research discovery and building innovative research environments. When the Burnham Institute for Medical Research in San Diego contacted him about the position of scientific director at its new Florida locale — due to open in 2009 — Kelly seized the opportunity to take a cross-disciplinary approach involving research on cardiovascular diseases, obesity, diabetes and other metabolic disorders.

"Kelly's willingness to step out of his productive, mid-career position is the type of risky career move needed for the biomedical sciences to evolve," says Jeff Gordon, director of the Center for Genome Sciences at Washington University.

Over the next year, Kelly will begin recruiting the roughly 30 principal investigators to be taken on within five years. As well, he plans to build relationships with the new medical school at the University of Central Florida, the University of Florida and Scripps Florida. "I never thought my career would lead to Orlando, but that just shows how following your vision can take you to unexpected places," says Kelly.

Virginia Gewin

BRICKS & MORTAR

Sunny view for Florida life sciences

In its bid to kindle a biotechnology boom, Florida is luring high-profile institutions to the southeastern part of the state with big bucks (see *Nature* **446**, 1112–1113; 2007). The state's 'innovation incentive' funds will devote more than \$220 million to three research institutes in Jupiter, Port St Lucie and Miami.

With more than \$90 million from the state and \$87 million from Palm Beach County, the Max Planck Florida Institute will be housed at the Jupiter campus of Florida Atlantic University, near Scripps Florida, which was set up in 2004 as an offshoot of Scripps in La Jolla, California. Max Planck Florida — the first Max Planck institute outside Europe — expects to create 170 positions, including division directors in three main areas: bioimaging, bioactivity measures and cellular mechanisms. Herbert Jäckle, a vice-president in the Max Planck Society, admits it's a high-risk venture. "But it's worth building up because of the fantastic spirit there," he says. The presence of Scripps influenced the society's decision to head for the sunshine state. Until a new facility is built (probably by 2010), Max Planck Florida will take over the space Scripps is now using for its temporary labs.

In nearby Port St Lucie, Oregon Health and Science University's

Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute will receive \$60 million in state funding and a new facility to study therapies in humans. Director Jay Nelson says it will soon begin recruiting 20 primary investigators; roughly 200 new employees will focus on the genetic basis of infection.

At the University of Miami, the Institute for Human Genomics — started last year by husband-and-wife team Margaret Pericak-Vance and Jeffery Vance — received an extra \$80 million from the state last month to expand. The Vances have recruited dozens of researchers from their former base, Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. The new funds, says Pericak-Vance, will aid computational infrastructure and help lure recruits who combine clinical specialisms with an interest in genomics. Pericak-Vance expects to have some 300 staff, once technical and support staff join in the next five years. New facilities are also under construction, largely funded by the University of Miami.

"I've never seen this level of cooperation between state, universities, counties and institutes, to realize their vision of creating a San Diego or Boston," says Nelson. "And they are going to do it."

Virginia Gewin

POSTDOC JOURNAL

David versus Goliath

Living in the Middle East, I often hear allusions to the biblical battle between David and Goliath, when a single stone took down the giant. As I put the finishing touches to a manuscript on the natural variation of flowering shoot systems in tomato, I realize the same allusion applies to young scientists. Biology is competitive.

There are many Goliath scientists with large grants and armies of postdocs. I've met many such giants, and some were frightening, cornering me at a poster session to tell me my data were bunk and my models were wrong. But others have been collegial, offering constructive criticism or sharing seeds from a particularly important mutant plant.

As I develop my ideas in a new field where I am keenly aware of competition, I find myself unable to avoid proverbial David-versus-Goliath battles. I've been debating whether it would be prudent to e-mail or even call a few Goliaths, in the hopes of establishing productive collaborations. But it might not go well.

I seem to recall the story ending with David cutting off Goliath's head. That suggests one way for me to go about it — publish fast and scoop the Goliath. But to be honest, I'm just not sure how fearless a David I am. And who knows? Collaborating just might help me become a Goliath one day.

Zachary Lippman is a postdoctoral fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's faculty of agriculture.